



# ***EASTERN WINDOWS-*** **WESTERN SKIES**

*by*  
Jean Gittins

The interest of this book, so clear and rapid in style, swings between the Colony of Hong Kong and the City of Melbourne, spreading out, during the middle decades of this century, over sojourns in the Far East as well as in Great Britain and Europe; encountering and describing people and places, events and emotions, of fascinating variety. Through all its overt attractiveness, there runs, unobtrusive and unintended, an undeclared demonstration of the spirit of our age: that a young woman may, by her own initiative, and to the general good, enter upon difficult undertakings and exacting duties, through disappointments, deep sorrows, cherished successes: depending entirely on her own cultivated intelligence, concentrated energy and personal charm: even though she happens to have been born a privileged member of a famous family.

The story spans a period of 60 years from 1908 presenting, in transit, not only a picture of family life in pre-war Hong Kong, but goes on to sketch the colony's recovery from the trauma of enemy occupation. At the same time insight is given of the problems, and compensations, of a newcomer to Australia in the difficult immediate post-war years.

Readers will find this book informative, impelling and enjoyable even if they have never been to Hong Kong or to Australia.

EASTERN WINDOWS — WESTERN SKIES

# EASTERN WINDOWS— WESTERN SKIES

*by*

Jean Gittins

Published by  
South China Morning Post, Ltd.  
Hong Kong  
1969



© Jean Gittins, 1969

Printed by  
South China Morning Post, Ltd.  
Hong Kong

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!  
But westward, look, the land is bright!

A. H. Clough (1819-1861)

Remembering

Stewart

whose keen interest was so reassuring

*fruit*

## FOREWORD

After her survival of internment in Stanley Camp, during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, Jean Gittins published a brief but widely appreciated account of that experience. In an introduction which she then asked me to write, I hoped for a longer account of far wider liberated experiences, to some day follow that first effort in print. This has now happened. Once again the author honours me by asking for an introductory note.

The interest of this book, so clear and rapid in style, swings between the Colony of Hong Kong and the City of Melbourne, spreading out, during the middle decades of this century, over sojourns in the Far East as well as in Great Britain and Europe; encountering and describing people and places, events and emotions, of fascinating variety. Through all its overt attractiveness, there runs, unobtrusive and unintended, an undeclared demonstration of the spirit of our age: that a young woman may, by her own initiative, and to the general good, enter upon difficult undertakings and exacting duties, through disappointments, deep sorrows, cherished successes; depending entirely on her own cultivated intelligence, concentrated energy and personal charm: even if she happens to have been born a privileged member of a very wealthy and famous family.

Her parents, Sir Robert and Lady Ho Tung (in the affection of many, "Lady Clara") were to me, during

thirty years of Hong Kong, quite the most wonderful couple in that marvellous colony: she, a profound Buddhist immersed in religious and charitable duties, always lovely to look at, replete with personal charm, kindness and comfort, was the devoted mother of a large family, gently but firmly insistent on mutual obligations: he, a man of big business exercising wide financial power in many directions through numerous assistants, was happily endowed with that higher order of intelligence which, in a community of many different peoples and extreme social grades, made him alert to everybody and everything, and prompted him to magnificent philanthropy; for which he was renowned abroad as well as at home. Like any other paterfamilias, Chinese or not, he would have wished to be a Confucian father, so far as his era, and his self-reliant children, allowed.

Hong Kong was a nest of public speakers; compelled or compulsory or compulsive. It could outspoke, in everyday routine, the present day BBC television set. Of the hundreds I listened to, half-a-dozen were speeches to remember. One was by Sir Robert Ho Tung in 1951. He was then 88 years old. He was extremely frail. It was the late afternoon of a cold day in March. He stood erect in the open air, among a scattered crowd, of whom none failed to hear a single word. He did not read a written speech. He did not falter, nor hum and haw. He had so clearly thought out what he was to say, that he seemed to voice an extempore meditation. His thought was direct and sincere. He was speaking at the opening of The Lady Ho Tung University Hostel.

For more than a generation, I enjoyed the good fortune of friendship with Sir Robert and Lady Ho Tung: also with their amiable and intellectually gifted

family, as they grew from childhood to parenthood, most of them attending some of my classes in the University of Hong Kong.

It is by reason of such admiration and friendship for the Ho Tung family, as well as admiration for what Jean has done, and how she has written it, that I take great pleasure in this book, which I believe all readers will find informative, impelling and enjoyable; even if they have never been to China nor Australia.

*Robert W. M. Simpson.*

Edinburgh

August, 1969.



## Acknowledgments

I should like to express gratitude to my family for their understanding, and to my nephew, Tak Shing Lo, for so generously acting as my legal representative in the publication of this book.

I am indebted to many friends for their tolerance and unfailing help. A list of their names would be over long but special mention must be made of G.J. Edmonds, of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (Trustee) Limited, and of H.J. McGrath, of the South China Morning Post. Geoffrey Edmond's assistance in "shopping around" for information not otherwise available to me at this distance, and his general role *in loco parentis*, have been very much appreciated; Joe McGrath's personal interest in the book's production has made smooth the way of a novice.

The initial help given by Patrick Tennison is recorded in the text. Beyond this his patient guidance has been of immense value.

I am, above all, deeply grateful to my friend and former teacher, Professor R.K.M. Simpson, who has helped me throughout. But for his continued interest and encouragement, and his literary advice, this mission might never have been accomplished.

JEAN GITTINS

Domain Park  
Australia. 3141

# CONTENTS

For My Young Relations .....	1
------------------------------	---

## *Book One: GRANDMA*

1. A Lone Family on the Peak .....	9
2. School-Days .....	26
3. We Join the Girl Guides .....	37
4. An Unexpected Trip to London .....	41
5. I Study the Classics .....	50
6. Two Eventful Years .....	54

## *Book Two: UNCLE BILLY*

1. A Glimpse of China .....	75
2. A "Missie" in Kowloon Tong .....	83
3. My Side of the Family .....	98
4. We Prepare for War .....	110
5. And War Came .....	122
6. The Years in Stanley .....	137

## *Book Three: ELIZABETH AND JOHN*

1. Sorrow Awaits Me .....	161
2. I Meet New Friends .....	166
3. Life Begins Afresh .....	173
4. Hong Kong — 1946 .....	188
5. Problems of the Postwar Years .....	199
6. Hong Kong — 1950 .....	212
7. I Begin to Take Root .....	225

*Book Four: SERGE*

1. My Roots Strengthen .....	243
2. I Change My Status .....	252
3. Serge Goes to England and I Tag On .....	258
4. And the Tree Flourished .....	275
5. Sadness Comes Again .....	290

*Epilogue*

The Time Has Come .....	300
<i>List of Familiar Names</i> .....	305

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing Page</i>
My Father in 1949 .....	12
My Mother in 1928 .....	13
My maternal Grandmother .....	20
Mother in ceremonial costume .....	20
Chinese New Year 1909 .....	21
Taken on my 10th birthday .....	21
The Diocesan Girls' School in the 1920s .....	72
A play by women undergraduates .....	72
The Guard of Honour at our wedding .....	73
John, with "Grouser" .....	96
Elizabeth and John .....	96
Billy and me at 11-mile Beach .....	97
Grace and Billy with Oscar her dog .....	97
My diary of gardening activities .....	148
Tabulated notes on sweet potato cultivation .....	149
Food Parcels received in internment .....	149
Mandarin Chinese Class Notes .....	156
Elizabeth .....	157
John .....	157
A family group .....	228
With Grandfather .....	228
Elizabeth's wedding day .....	229
John's wedding .....	229
Gathered for Father's 90th birthday .....	236
Hesta and Robbie .....	236
Vic in traditional gown .....	237
"M.K" .....	237
The Temple-School Complex .....	272
Mr. and Mrs. Gittins .....	273
The "Prof." .....	276
Serge .....	276

Jacket: On the balcony at *Idlewild*, November 1969 by kind favour of *Joseph Hotung*. Photograph by *Rudy Khoo*

## FOR MY YOUNG RELATIONS

The name on my passport reads Jean Gittins Hohlov; at the University of Melbourne it is Jean Gittins; to the younger generation in Hong Kong I am simply Auntie Jean.

It is November, 1967. The time is spring. My hometown is Melbourne. This was not always so. I used to live in Hong Kong, one of a large family group, amidst a wide circle of friends. Twenty-two years have passed since I first set foot in Sydney. It was October, 1945. The second world war was over, and the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong had ended. Surviving internment in Stanley Camp for civilians, I had come to Australia in joyful expectation of a family reunion. Our children, Elizabeth and John, had been sent to friends in Melbourne in 1941. A prisoner-of-war of the Battle for Hong Kong, my husband, William (Billy) Gittins had been drafted to Japan. It was expected that when released he, too, would come to Australia. We would then go home.

How well I remember the fresh beauty of spring in Sydney, the tender green which mantled the trees, and the colour and scent of roses. Roses did not grow well in Hong Kong and, in any case, after the sordidness and boredom of internment, it felt just wonderful to live again in freedom and in hope. But freedom rang hollow; hope was short-lived. Billy did not come. The serene beauty of spring in Sydney was suddenly shattered by sorrow, and the joy of reunion with the children in Melbourne was to be shadowed by lost hope. With Billy gone I had no excuse to take the children back to a "dead" city. We made Melbourne our home, at least until Hong Kong had recovered from the ravages of war and neglect.

Life was not always easy. The difficulties of strange surroundings were increased by the trauma of shock and the slowly mounting after-effects of malnutrition. Furthermore,

in pre-war Hong Kong, I had been thoroughly spoiled. This was understandable and inevitable in a small community where everyone knew who everybody was. Perhaps the saddest circumstance was to be a lost soul in a large city which was itself suffering acute restrictions as a result of war. As late as the 1940s, Australia still dealt mainly in primary and related industries; a newly awakened secondary growth had been decimated by her war effort. Although she was not herself the scene of battle action, Australia had generously and wholeheartedly answered the call of the Mother Country for aid. All shipping facilities had been channelled into the transport of troops and war materials, causing a grave shortage of even essential imported goods. The housing situation was desperate; even shared accommodation was difficult to come by. I lived only for the day when I could take the children home.

But we stayed on. In spite of their natural loyalty to Hong Kong, I sensed in the children a growing fondness for the Australian way of life and, indeed, they are both happily married to Australians now. For my own part, I became increasingly absorbed in my work at the University of Melbourne. After some initial homesickness and considerable uncertainty there was no thought of returning to Hong Kong except for the occasional holiday. Our lives had undergone metamorphosis.

And now, twenty-two years after my arrival in Melbourne, I sit on the balcony of my flat in South Yarra on a warm Sunday afternoon. Across Domain Road is the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne's pride. It is considered to be one of the finest public gardens in the world. The trees are not yet coated with summer dust but, this year, the lawns are dry and brown because of a lack of rain. Above and beyond the Gardens there is a panoramic view of the city of Melbourne, its rapidly changing skyline merging into a background formed by hills and ranges.

By leaning well over the corner of the balcony I can see on the extreme west the You Yangs near Geelong, a bird sanctuary where John spent many a weekend during his schooldays. Next to them, towards the northwest, are the



Anakies and, further on, the distinctive Mount Macedon rises some forty miles away. Pretty Sally lies almost due north, and from the north through to the east, stretches the mountains of the Great Divide, reaching right over to Mount Dandenong, with its television towers, broken only by a gap through which the Maroondah Highway threads its way to the townships of Lilydale, Healesville and Marysville, which nestle at the foot of the ranges. On one occasion I thought I could see quite clearly through this gap Mount Buller, the Mecca of Victorian skiers, but John tells me that, although this is where Mount Buller should be, he thinks what I saw was more likely mirage.

I move to look out of my kitchen window and there is a picture of Albert Park with its palm trees, and its lake, in the centre of which is an island in an almost tropical setting. The colourful sails of many small craft move rapidly in the stiff afternoon breeze. Port Phillip Bay to the south sparkles in the sunshine. On my left is the Mornington Peninsula with Arthur's Seat easily identified; on my right sprawls Williamstown, Point Cook and the Bellarine Peninsula and, because it is a fine and clear day, I can just make out the lighthouse at Queenscliff, at the entrance to Port Phillip Heads.

I return to the balcony. Now I am writing and I dwell upon many things . . . . . This is how, one day last April, it all began.

\* \* \*

"I don't know what has come over me," I moaned to an associate on the medical staff of the Department of Pathology in the University of Melbourne, where I am the Secretary. "I can't seem to remember anything these days and I feel so terribly depressed I could cheerfully drown myself." I meant it too. Things had gone wrong lately. I felt utterly lost and dejected.

My listener is an academic pathologist, one who studies not treatment but the science of disease. He is a friend of long standing and, many a time, has he listened to my tales of woe. He now said: "You always get depressed at this time of the year, and you get over it, so I wouldn't worry if I were

you. As for your failing memory, it is just the aging process." This, I knew, was a term they use in polite circles to indicate senility. He went on to explain: "As is common to all of us, one's neurones begin to die off at the age of sixteen years so that, when one reaches your age, one becomes demonstrably forgetful. There is nothing strange in this nor is there a cure for the condition. You must accept it as a fact of life."

My associates are some fifteen years younger than I but I must seem to them a good deal older. Some extend to me the courtesy they would give to their mothers; others clearly think me tiresome but tolerate me as a not unpleasant encumbrance. The research "girls", doctors of philosophy now, tell me they had stood in awe of me when they first joined the department, and my listener himself has yet to miss an opportunity to tease me about my "advanced" years. They are never unkind and, in fact, no one could have been kinder or more sympathetic than these same people who, only a year before, had shared with me the sudden harrowing loss of our Professor, and of my second husband, Serge Hohlov, who was also on our staff.

Professor King and Serge had both been ill for some time and, although both had struggled to stay on their feet, they had died unexpectedly within ten weeks of one another. When it was all over there had been no escape for me either at home or at work and, after twelve months, I was still feeling a delayed shock worsened by the undesirable effects of a tranquilizing drug which had not agreed with me. My colleagues had realized that further sympathy would probably have precipitated a complete breakdown in health; what I needed was to be dragged out of the vacuum of apathy, in the centre of which I had locked myself. They now determined that the department was no longer to be my sole interest. A course in adult education was prescribed: I was to go back to school.

A syllabus from the Council of Adult Education was produced and I remember feeling quite relieved when we discovered that, of the courses that I might have attempted, all had either begun or were fully enrolled. It looked as

though I would be able to escape for at least the autumn season but someone pointed out that the Stock Exchange course, to begin shortly, was an interesting one. It consisted of four lectures and a visit to the Stock Exchange of Melbourne. I was not greatly impressed but fell in with their suggestion. I would probably have played truant at the last moment had not Stewart, Elizabeth's husband and a most understanding person, said that he would like to come along with me. We attended the weekly sessions and dined together afterwards. To be quite honest, I must admit to having had greater pleasure in the companionship that arises from doing something with someone than satisfaction in the lectures themselves.

When the spring syllabus arrived I took the first opportunity to enrol for one of the classes on Feature Writing given by the free-lance journalist Patrick Tennison. Many years ago I had been about to embark on a career in journalism but my Father, on reflection, had decided that at sixteen I was too young to be left alone in London and I had been whisked back to Hong Kong where I attended University instead. All that was left to me was a yearning to write and, whenever opportunity has arisen, I have found in writing a most absorbing occupation which, in times of stress, has been of unfailing comfort. All the same the effort of attending a course seemed hardly justifiable for, although I knew that there would be much that could be learned, I was highly sceptical of even moderate success from the point of view of my health.

It was therefore with reservation and little real enthusiasm that I attended the first lecture in mid-September but, knowing myself to be of a conscientious disposition, I felt confident that no effort would be spared.

We were soon set an exercise: to write a feature story on any item of news that might appeal to us. A fortnight went by before I came across something about which I felt in a position to comment and then, partly through impatience but mostly because of a lack of genuine interest, the result was not a success. I determined to try again.

As the weeks passed I began to find the classes both

helpful and instructive. I was soon attending them not because they were prescribed therapy but with purposeful intent. At Mr. Tennison's suggestion I brought in previous work for criticism; through his encouragement, my still flickering enthusiasm sparked suddenly into flame. I mentioned a suggestion made some time ago by Emeritus Professor R. K. M. Simpson, of the University of Hong Kong, that I should try writing up my experiences; but so long as I was still at work — and especially after Serge's death, I saw no prospect of early retirement — I felt that it would be folly to indulge in so demanding a pastime.

It was now pointed out to me that, with so much material in hand, I should at least make a start. I promised to think it over. I pondered the matter on my way home and for the rest of the evening. The more I pondered, the more I liked the idea. I looked over some of the material . . . I *will* write a book, I determined. This was Wednesday evening, 25th October, 1967. I had at last met a challenge and stumbled on a stimulus.

Since that evening in October the project has never been far from my thoughts. Benefits gained from the course have extended well beyond instruction on the principles of feature writing, or even the acquisition of new interest. Above all, I learnt once again that fear can be overcome by simple endeavour; courage needs to be bolstered with hope. Shortly before the war a palmist in Hong Kong had shaken his head slowly at the picture he saw of my future. "But," he said, "do not despair. Whenever things seem darkest, some one will come to lead you into the light." The wisdom of his philosophy has proved itself time and time again. In the present instance, the study class alone could point only in a general direction; I needed to be led step by step. In Mr. Tennison's interest and generosity the palmist's words have once again found fulfilment. This is a comforting thought.

And so I ventured to record my experiences. In dedicating it to my young relations, I feel that it is they who will be most concerned. And if, perchance, my story should hold their attention, the telling of it will have been completely worthwhile.

## *Book One:* GRANDMA

1. A Lone Family on the Peak .. .. .	9
2. School-Days .. .. .	26
3. We Join the Girl Guides .. .. .	37
4. An Unexpected Trip to London .. .. .	41
5. I Study the Classics .. .. .	50
6. Two Eventful Years .. .. .	54





## A LONE FAMILY ON THE PEAK

I was born on 18th April, 1908, in an old fashioned two-storeyed wooden house in the exclusive residential district, a thousand feet above sea level, known as The Peak, in Hong Kong. *The Chalet*, as the house was called, was one of a group of three, the other two were sprawling bungalows, bought in 1906 by my Father from a Mr. C. W. Richards, an English gentleman about to retire from the Colony. They were average sized houses with three bedrooms and, as is normal in houses in the tropics, each had a simple bathroom attached. In each house were living and dining rooms, wide, enclosed verandahs, and kitchens and quarters for servants. There was therefore plenty of space; but we were a large family — by no means a rarity in the east — and we filled the three houses. *The Chalet* and one of the bungalows, *Dunford*, were separated by a tennis court; in these Mother and we children lived. My parents had ten children: Vic, the eldest, had been named Victoria Jubilee because she had been born in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and, following her in this order were Henry, Daisy, Edward (Eddie), Eva, Irene, Robert (Robbie), myself, Grace and Florence. Henry had died in infancy and, in 1908, when this story begins, Grace and Florence had not yet been born.

Our surroundings were rural but gardens with flower beds and shrubs flanked the houses at their far ends. Because of the steepness of the site the houses had been built on retaining walls, over high basements and between the two basements was a second tennis court. Below the houses and tennis courts the vegetable garden spread in terraced rows down the hillside towards natural scrub. The third house, *The Neuk*, was situated a few hundred yards away and, through a semi-private path, could be reached in a few minutes.

This was occupied by Father and his personal staff when he came up to the Peak for rest or recuperation for, suffering for many years from a serious digestive complaint, he never enjoyed normal health and was at all times to be spared the hustle and bustle of a young and growing family. In spite of his delicate health he out-lived my Mother by eighteen years. It was his aim to be a centenarian but pleurisy followed by pneumonia in the late spring of 1956 proved fatal. He was in his ninety-fourth year when he died.

As well as the houses, the purchase from Mr. Richards included furniture and other household effects. I don't think any of us knew which of the furniture had come with the houses but I have been told that the piano in the drawing room of *The Chalet* — a *Robinson* upright — had belonged to him, as had the large glazed earthenware tubs in the bathrooms. We also inherited a "houseboy", whose name was Chan Bun. We were taught to address him as "Bun Gor". The word "Gor" in Chinese means elder brother, and all the men servants had to have this courtesy title added to their names, in the same way as all the *amahs* (women servants) were addressed as elder sisters. As we grew older and became a little cheeky we used to call him "Chan-Ah-Bun", like his contemporaries did, and even nicknamed him "China-Bun", but he took it in good spirit. He stayed with us until he retired some forty years later.

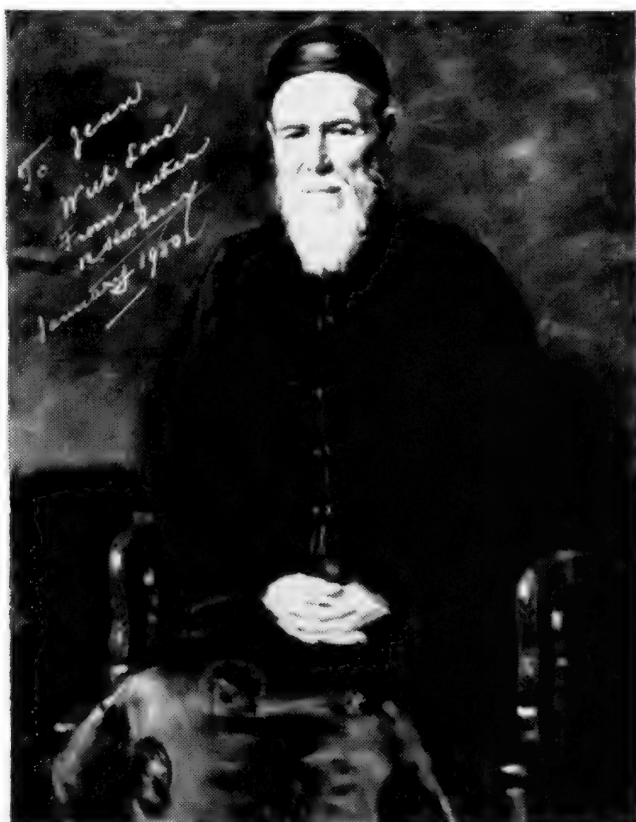
Like so many of the local residents in Hong Kong, my parents, Sir Robert and Lady Clara Ho Tung, had a mixed Anglo-Chinese heritage. In those days and until the end of World War II, racial discrimination in Hong Kong was such that it was a most unfortunate circumstance to belong to a community which, by rights, should have been classified "Euro-Asian" but its people were, in fact, accepted by neither European nor Chinese. My Father had had a Chinese upbringing although he had been to the Hong Kong Central School, later to be known as Queen's College, and had studied English. He decided to claim Chinese nationality — possibly because he knew that the Chinese would not be so discourteous as to disown him openly but I think it was chiefly due to the fact that he knew, with his English education, he would have

a distinct advantage over his contemporaries in his dealings with the British. This did not concern me greatly in my young days but, after I went to school and found that other families like ourselves had merely accepted the situation of their birth, I used to feel sorry that he should have thrown in his lot with the Chinese. Moreover my leanings, for some reason unknown to me, were always towards the British, and none of us looked altogether Chinese in appearance. This complicated situation was therefore a continual source of embarrassment to me.

On looking back over the years and seeing what Father has accomplished, I realize how wise had been his judgment, how penetrating his foresight. He knew what he wanted from life and possessed the ability and perseverance to get it. From a humble background, he became the doyen of the Eurasian community and was made a Justice of the Peace in 1899. Because of his health and personal commitments, he declined to serve on the Legislative Council when invited to do so, but gave his services freely, whenever it was sought, at top level conferences, or he would act as personal adviser to the Governor-in-Council. The wealth which came to him at an early age made him a ready and generous benefactor to the community generally and educational institutions, including the University of Hong Kong, shared in his philanthropy. He was human enough to take pleasure in any recognition given to him, one of the more satisfying honours being a degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* from the University. For his services to Britain he was created Knight Bachelor by King George V in 1915 and in 1955, Queen Elizabeth II conferred on him the further honour of Knight of the British Empire. Nor did his donations to relief work in China and his help to the Portuguese administration in Macau escape recognition by their respective governments. In business, his acumen ensured success in all his dealings yet he was esteemed and respected by all friends and associates; his foresight and judgment were constantly sought after and, even at an advanced age and until death claimed him, he held directorships in many of the leading business houses in prosperous post-war Hong Kong.

I think I may safely claim to be the first Chinese baby to be born on the Peak and, indeed, it was strange that we should have grown up in these surroundings at all for, until after the second world war, no other Chinese family had been granted the privilege, special permission from the Governor-in-Council being required to live in this exclusive residential district. Had it been left to Father, this step would never have been even considered but someone had suggested to Mother that there was nothing to compare with the health-giving value of the Peak air for growing children and, this being the case, she would not rest until she had us settled there.

Fresh air and exclusiveness notwithstanding facilities on the Peak were at this time understandably primitive. Braving these conditions would try the spirit of a pioneer but, for a woman with a large family of young children, it needed true courage. The isolation alone must have been frightening for access, other than walking, was by cable tram which gave an infrequent service. Here the amenities stopped. Roads were little more than footpaths and travel between tram terminus and home was made by sedan chair for which we kept our own staff of coolies. We lived about a mile and a half from the upper tram terminus. The houses had been built on the side of a steep gully at the foot of Mount Kellet and were approached by a long, winding path which bifurcated before the last turn to reach *The Chalet* on the left and *Dunford* on the right. There was not a single, even small, store in the entire district so that every simple need had to be procured from town. Sewerage and electricity were dreams of the future. Cooking was done by wood or by coal and lighting was by gas, using old fashioned fittings with extremely flimsy mantles which had to be continually replaced. Strangely enough there was street lighting, although this was probably not present in the early days; but when I was a child I distinctly remember that a man would go round each evening with a long stick to turn on the lights. The same process would be repeated at dawn. Even though the temperatures were mostly around 10°F. lower than that of the city, food storage was always an acute problem and, as for milk supply (we kept our own cows in a shed in the grounds of the town



*My Father in 1949*

*From an oil portrait by Sir Oswald Birley which hangs in the Board Room  
of Jardine Matheson & Co. Ltd. in Hong Kong*



*My Mother in 1928*

*Mother, a devout Buddhist found great comfort  
and relaxation in her "rosary" which she constantly  
carried*

*Photograph by Van Dyke of London.*



house *Idlewild*), many a time have we been required to drink it in a soured condition. The opportunity was always taken, if we complained, to tell us that it was more easily digestible and therefore so much the better for us. Added to this was the problem of fog which was particularly heavy during the summer months and sometimes, for days on end, humidity would remain at saturation point and visibility would be reduced to not more than a few feet.

Our houses were situated on the south side of the island and we overlooked Deep Water Bay and Repulse Bay. The views may not be as exciting as those of houses facing the harbour where there was a constant movement of ships and other craft, but to us on the ocean side, each variation in shade and colour of land, sea and sky brought fresh and unending interest. At dusk and in the moonlight the outlines of the bays and islands would be strangely softened, yet clearly defined, and we would linger on the tennis lawn whispering and dreaming of the future, far into the night, when fishing lights would shine in calm waters like so many earthly stars. From *The Neuk* we could see the village of Aberdeen, the home of fishermen, where small boats and large ocean-going junks lay in harbour side by side. When we felt like exploring farther, it would be only a matter of some thirty minutes to run down the steep track but the upward climb would take at least an hour and a half. Nevertheless it was a pleasant way of spending a free Sunday afternoon. There were no fences around any of the houses on the Peak and when we could get away from our lessons we might climb Mount Kellet, or pick barleyboos when in season, or just wander over hill and scrub.

Mother was a most conscientious parent and no problem proved insuperable nor task too great if it meant that our health or education would benefit. She aimed at giving us the cream of the two cultures and taught us to follow in the best traditions of west as well as of east. With these thoughts in mind she had living with us a Chinese master and a governess. There was a succession of these over the years but the one I remember best was Miss H. Hecht, who came out specially from England. Grace and I were her

special charges and, till now, we both think of her with affection. She stayed with us until she was married and then Grace and I went to school.

The Chinese master, Mr. Chiu Tse Kai was a fine relic of the Ching dynasty and still kept his hair in a plait coiled under his cap. All around the long hair forming the plait, his head was clean shaven — a barber used to come about once a month and on these days we would be dismissed early as I expect he liked to have a rest after his shave. We called him "Old Master". This is the form of address most widely used because Chinese people revere age and learning and the reference to "old" in no way spells disrespect. A strict disciplinarian in the classroom, he was at the same time the kindest of men. He had his desk placed in a strategic position at the apex of a right angle which formed the verandah of *Dunford*; our desks were all arranged on either side of him so that he could see all of us at the same time. He devised all sorts of punishment when we were naughty but praised us when praise was due, and never a festival morning passed without an array on his desk of a small gift for each of us. He had a remarkable general knowledge for one of his generation and was himself a keen student of natural science. He would organize day-long walking picnics for us, in which Mother sometimes joined. These hikes were as instructive as they were entertaining, especially as we were always accompanied by two of the coolies who carried the discarded coats and woollies, and a light chair lift in case of accidents or if Mother or one of us younger ones could not make the distance and had to be assisted. He prided himself on the accuracy of his weather forecasting and, when we were kept in bed on some minor ailment, he would himself take our pulse and prescribe some or other Chinese herb. He was also something of a Sherlock Holmes and I well remember the occasion when a young coolie had stolen some jewellery belonging to Miss Hecht. The police were summoned but it was Old Master who found the stolen property hidden in an old drain in the garden and, in due course, trapped the thief. When he finally retired to his native village, his position was taken by a distinguished scholar skilled in calligraphy, but he

did not fill the place in our hearts. I am afraid we never gave him a chance.

Each Wednesday and most Saturday afternoons Madam Mousson would come to give us piano lessons. Poor Madam! The half hour devoted to each pupil must have been a heart-breaking task at times. Robbie and I were perhaps the worst. It wasn't as though I was lazy for I worked regularly at my scales and exercises but, however hard I tried, I never seemed to get on. This in itself was disheartening but how we hated having to perform — Grace and I used to play duets — when we had visitors. We usually tried our best to keep out of the way. Fortunately for Madam, Grace and Eva were apt pupils and made up to a large extent for what she failed to bring out in the rest of us.

Our days were well organized. The mornings were taken up with English lessons and the afternoons were spent with the Old Master, practising calligraphy and studying the elementary classics. When these were over Miss Hecht would take Grace and me for a walk. She would meet other governesses and, sitting at some shaded seat, they would knit and chat whilst we played with the other children at hopscotch or some other game. This was the highlight of a normal day except, on occasion and without any apparent reason, the others might suddenly refuse to play with us because we were Chinese, or they might tell us that we should not be living on the Peak. Racial discrimination had extended even to the children and children can be so cruel. Miss Hecht would be really angry at this. She would at once take us away and make a fuss of us and tell us stories on the way home. As is always the case, a kind and gentle gesture from her, and our hurt would be assuaged.

When the weather was suitable we would sometimes have the loan of one of the company launches and Mother would take us out swimming at some nearby beach. She had been advised that swimming was good exercise for children and, especially after the tragedy following the sinking of one of the crowded Macau Steamboat Company's ferries, nothing would satisfy her but that we should take swimming lessons from a "pro". We greatly enjoyed the outings but, in those

days, there were no aids for beginners and I can still remember the first lessons in which I splashed and struggled, having been suspended by a rope lashed under my arms, whilst the instructor stayed near at hand to see that I did not drown.

Even with the days being as well filled as they were, we must have been bored, as children are, at times, but over all we had a happy and interesting childhood. We younger ones had our squabbles — what large family doesn't? — and we were often in trouble doing those things which we should have left undone. This happened most often when our two cousins, Hong and Ning, boys whose ages came between Robbie's and mine, came to stay with us for some years. They were Mother's nephews. They had suddenly lost their mother and their father had decided to begin life afresh in north China. The boys grew up eventually to be useful citizens but, dear me, we were very glad when the time came for them to join their father. Meanwhile a lot of the trouble stemmed from the fact that they had come with a reputation of being thoroughly undisciplined children and Mother had felt it incumbent on her to exert strict control over their behaviour. However, because they were not her own children, each time she had to discipline them, Robbie and I shared in their fate. As if this were not sufficient, it often happened that should the inclusion of Hong and Ning at any outing make our party too large and unmanageable, or if they had not been invited, Robbie and I would have to stay home also so that they should not feel neglected. Grace was two years younger than I and was at this time the baby of the family and Mother's favourite, so that as such she was always included. We felt the injustice of this even more than the punishment, with the result that Grace, through no fault of her own, was often excluded by us in our immediate outings and games.

We kept a pair of goats (someone had wanted them slaughtered but Mother said she would give them a home) and two donkeys which she imported from north China to give us an opportunity to ride. Here again she had been told that riding developed good posture. On arrival the donkeys had been fitted with saddles and bridles by the Hong Kong

Jockey Club stables, where they were to be taken regularly to be clipped and shod. Miss Hecht had named the donkeys "Jeremy" and "Jericho". They had none of the perverseness usually ascribed to their species but, like all the other animals, became our friends. They were not young when they were sent to us but we kept them for about twenty years. They were often lent to charitable organizations where, because they were so used to being handled by children, they were a great attraction at garden fetes. We kept several cats including a pair of Siamese kittens but the dogs were our favourites and we each had our very own. They loved to jump into bed with us at night, which was strictly forbidden, but they grew to be so cunning at concealing themselves that it was not often that we were caught. The dogs were particularly useful at meal times: there was a rule that whatever was served to us had to be eaten so that whatever we could not swallow was quietly slipped under the table and the dogs helped us out.

We often came across snakes when out picking barleyboos and, although there are poisonous varieties in Hong Kong, no one in the household was ever bitten. One night, however, when I was about four, Chan-Ah-Bun was crossing the lower tennis court in his final round of duties and kicked against, as he thought, a bamboo pole which had been left lying there by one of the chair coolies. Complaining of their carelessness, he bent to pick it up when he saw by the light of the lantern he was carrying that it was a python slowly parading across the lawn. He raised the alarm and all the coolies rushed out to lend assistance. The snake was caught alive and I can still remember seeing it in the morning, coiled at the bottom of a zinc bath, waiting to be taken to the museum where it was preserved and kept for many years.

At night and in the early hours of morning we would hear the shrill, continuous bark of the wild deer which often ventured among the vegetables and posed a problem for the gardeners by eating the new shoots with discriminating taste. Once, during World War I, a tiger roamed the Kowloon hills for many weeks causing much concern and loss of livestock among the villagers in the New Territories. Then it

was seen on the island and was reputed to be living on the Peak. People were afraid to go out after dark and, sure enough, we found its tracks on the vegetable beds and the body of one of our cats lay flattened nearby. The Chinese say that tigers do not devour their own kind; the weight of a heavy paw is sufficient to put an end to any cat audacious enough to cross their path. The tiger was eventually shot by our police and its stuffed skin is displayed among our museum pieces.

Mother loved any form of drama and encouraged the governesses to stage little plays for us. One I can remember most clearly — *The Sleeping Beauty* — was shown at *The Neuk*. Eva was the Princess and a friend, Charlie Choa, was Prince Charming. I was the Lilac Fairy and wore a silver star on my head and in my hand I carried a crystal ornament. I thought it was wonderful. The governess, Mrs. Cumming at that time, was herself the wicked fairy. It was quite a successful performance and I remember Father congratulating us. But if Mother had a passion, other than her family, it was the Chinese opera and whenever her favourite troupe came to Hong Kong she would attend every possible performance night and day. They usually had two sessions: beginning at about noon, the day-time session would continue to five o'clock and, at night, the show would begin at seven and last until midnight, when an Indian policeman would come on the stage to call a stop. If there happened to be a suitable show for children on a Saturday night — and a good troupe would have a complete repertoire of historical and legendary plays in which good always triumphed over evil — we would be allowed to attend. This was a treat indeed and, no matter how often we watched the same play, the pleasure and excitement never abated. The actors as a rule would be an all male cast but very occasionally there would be a female troupe. The impersonation in either case was superb, the costumes consistently extravagant and always depicted the correct style of the period. Each troupe carried its own musicians and instruments: gongs, drums, cymbals, bells and various strings. The noise would be terrific, especially when depicting a battle. There was little or no scenery but the action of the players,

for example, when riding a horse or merely entering a doorway would be so well enacted that it needed very little imagination on the part of the audience to know what it was all about. We would have tea and light refreshments at the theatre. There was no cafeteria but waiters would come around at any time (no one seemed to mind the interruptions) with trays of "dim sims" (savouries) but Mother always provided her own. After the performance, because the Peak trams had stopped running, we would spend the night at *Idlewild*, or in the suite of rooms attached to Father's office in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building.

Eddie, born in 1902, was a delicate child and, especially before the family moved up to the Peak, had to be taken away for a change of air each summer because he used to get repeated attacks of a tropical fever. Early in the summer of 1904 Mother had taken him to Japan. This was during the Russo-Japanese War but at that time the fighting was confined to Manchuria and it was considered quite safe for her to go. However, naval operations broke out between the two nations and she was stranded in Japan and, as a consequence, Irene was born in the Japanese port of Nagasaki in October, 1904. In 1907 they moved to live on the Peak but when the hot weather came around in June, 1908, even though I was barely three months old, my parents, taking Vic and Eddie with them, went to the United States of America and stayed in San Francisco for eighteen months. On their return early in January, 1910 Grace was born and Father became very seriously ill. It was the same digestive complaint that he had had over the years. The doctors thought that it was a form of sprue but no one really knew what was wrong with him or how to treat the condition. It must have been an extremely anxious time for Mother.

In spite of all her conscientiousness regarding parental responsibility, Mother was singularly lacking in patience. Undoubtedly she was in great difficulty and had much on her mind but, her complete failure to understand my super-sensitive nature gave rise to the only real unhappiness I experienced in childhood. It began at this time. According to her, I had had a very indulgent amah when they were away

and, in spite of the guardianship of the Old Master and the prevailing governess, I had been hopelessly spoiled. I used to take hours over my meals which the amah prepared on a dish standing over a bowl of hot water and, as the water cooled, she would change it several times. Mother decided to take me in hand and her disciplinary measures were so rigid that I became terrified of her. Whenever she showed the slightest sign of impatience, or even when she called me to her without any thought of reprimand, I would burst into tears. This further aggravated her irritability and unkind people made things worse by telling her that this constant weeping in a child was a bad omen and Father was doomed to die. Poor, misguided Mother, instead of giving me the comfort and understanding that one might have expected of her, she became more impatient still. It was a vicious circle and although as I grew older the tears became less frequent, the fear remained. I know that this sounds silly but, even after I had left school, if at any time I should have to ask a favour of her, my heart would pound with nervousness. And yet I can truthfully say that I bore Mother not the slightest grudge. I understood so well the cause of her impatience and only tried the harder to overcome my own failing and do something — anything — to earn her approbation. At the same time I made a silent resolve that, if ever I should have children of my own, I would *never* be impatient with them. As it turned out, I seldom was; Elizabeth and John were exceptional children. Meanwhile I am thankful to add that many years later, after the breach with my Mother over my first marriage had healed (the birth of Elizabeth had brought us together) we were able to discuss this problem freely but the early unhappiness has left its scar. To this day, whenever anyone speaks sharply to me, or is impatient in any way, my eyes still fill with tears and, if I try to speak, my voice will break. It is a reflex action and completely beyond my control.

Because of the weight of his business commitments, and limitations due to his indifferent health, we saw little of Father during these years. He would sometimes send for us on a Sunday and, when we had assembled in the drawing





*My maternal Grandmother*



*Mother in ceremonial costume worn early in the century.*

*Note the standard photographic setting of a fan held in the hand, and a tea table at the side. The spittoon shown in the upper photograph is essential drawing room equipment, mainly used as a repository for tobacco waste from the water pipe shown in the photograph of my Mother. This was included as a decorative aid even though she did not smoke.*



*Chinese New Year  
1909*



*Taken on my 10th  
birthday in the  
garden of Idlewild*

room of *The Neuk*, he would come in and, in single file, we would approach him, to be gently shaken by the hand and given a parental kiss. At these meetings he would accord us the same courtesy that he would give to visitors and would, if he felt well enough, have "tiffin", the midday meal, with us. I can still recall the slim, elegant figure of the early days, the frailness of his physique, his long blue Chinese gown over which he wore a short black jacket with jade stud buttons, and his delicate and very smooth hands. If at any time he was displeased with us he would not show it but would give Mother the responsibility of correcting us: when our behaviour did not become us, we were "her" children; if, as in later years, we did well at school, we took after him! I can remember only one occasion when he took the matter into his own hands. He had received a complaint from the Peak tram inspector, who was a most officious person, about Robbie having been rude to him. Father took this very much to heart, summoned us all to his presence, gave a lecture on propriety in conduct and, to our amazement, caned Robbie several times on each hand. He was rather a stranger to us — someone we regarded with awe and with respect. This is as it should be in a Chinese family. It was not until after the second world war and we lived in different countries that we grew to understand and love one another.

We were taught to be frugal because, as Mother said, our future husbands might not be as wealthy as Father was and she did not want us to feel the difference. Actually I was totally unaware of Father's financial situation and, as we had all that we needed there was no reason to think about such things or to compare our circumstances with anyone else's. We knew naturally that there were poor and even indigent people but we led sheltered lives and were seldom exposed to realistic pictures of real poverty or want. In those days one would seldom see a beggar in the street and we would only encounter them when we visited the graves of our ancestors at the spring and autumn functions, *Ching Ming* and *Chung Yeung*. At these times the beggars would flock to the cemetery and would wait at the entrance for Father to arrive and he would distribute coins to them.

We had to practise humbleness and courtesy to all people at all times. I have mentioned how the servants had to be addressed as elder brothers and sisters; we were required also to say "please" and "thank you" without fail. In this as in all things Father set a fine example and Mother saw to it that we followed his lead. Mother had a strong dislike for "pidgin" English and although this was widely adopted by all Europeans in speaking to their servants, we were never allowed to use it. Among ourselves, Chinese was naturally our mother tongue but we were encouraged, especially at meal times, to converse in English so that we grew up to be entirely bilingual, not only in speech but in our thoughts as well as in our dreams. Sometimes we would use a sentence consisting of a mixture of English and Chinese phrases or, if it expressed our meaning more clearly, even a single word might be a combination of the two languages.

I have only the faintest recollection of the only grandparent I knew, our maternal Grandmother. We all remember "Paw Paw", as we called her, as the kindest and most lovable of old ladies into whose arms we would fly for refuge when in trouble and she would wipe away our childish tears. Her death in 1912 was a grievous loss and Mother was heartbroken. During the ceremonies following her funeral (funerals in our family were usually conducted in the Chinese pattern whereas weddings seemed always to follow the English style) I was involved in a nasty accident. This is mentioned here because, as a result of an injury sustained in this accident, I was to be sent to London in 1924 for surgery. It happened in this way. I was at that time not quite four years old. We had gathered in the street outside Grandmother's house to watch the burning of paper offerings: houses, furniture, clothing, money, sedan chairs and the like, for her use in her after life when a cyclist's warning bell was heard. Someone had drawn me to one side of the road but our governess, at that time a very severe Chinese trained specialist from Canton, called me to her from the other side. Without thinking of the consequences I began running over to her and was knocked down by the cyclist. I suffered a broken arm and a blow on the head. The lump which came up behind my right ear never

subsided and, years later, when it was diagnosed as a compact osteoma its possible aetiology was traced to this blow.

My parents went to Peking in 1912, taking with them Vic, Eddie and Robbie. The visit was extended into the following year because Father had an accident on the train which resulted in a dislocated hip joint. They spent two months of the northern winter in freezing temperatures on a railway carriage because he could not be moved. Vic was a great help but Mother must have had a most difficult time. It appears that they received a good deal of assistance from army personnel in the locality and, when they came home, Robbie had set his heart on a military training. From then on Father always addressed him as "Generalissimo". This foreshadowed his future career.

We were all taken to Shanhaikwan on the northeast coast of China early in the summer of 1914. We were a large party and Father had chartered the passenger accommodation on one of Jardine Matheson's cargo ships, the S.S. *Cheong Shing*, commanded by Captain V. McC. Liddell. But even this did not hold us all for, besides Mother and all of us, there were the Old Master and our cousins, Hong and Ning, as well as a full domestic staff. The cabins of the *compradore* and the chief steward were commandeered as well but, in spite of this, we were still so cramped in the cabins that Captain Liddell arranged for two hammocks to be hung on his deck for Robbie and me. It must have been a unique experience to sleep in hammocks on the Captain's deck in the open sea. I wonder if as children we appreciated fully the wonderful kindness that had prompted the Captain to help us in this way. But this was not all for, when the weather turned inclement in the night, as it sometimes did, Captain Liddell would carry us into his cabin and place us in his own bed, and he would spend the rest of the night on his settee.

We travelled with over one hundred pieces of luggage and furniture (including a piano!) as a prolonged visit was planned and Father was to have joined us later. An old unfurnished Buddhist temple, within easy distance of the beach and of the Great Wall of China had been rented for us. It

was a rambling old building with a large courtyard in the centre and rooms around the courtyard. It had smaller courtyards on the sides of the centre unit and, around these, were further rooms. We soon settled down to a life of holiday routine. Nor was it entirely one of idleness or pleasure. Not at all, for the Old Master saw to it that we did our lessons and a Miss Coollagher came daily to help us with our English and our music. We had a donkey ride to the beach each morning. They would be brought to the house by their attendants and we would ride over for a swim before breakfast. The sand was beautifully fine and white and the surf, rolling in from the Pacific Ocean, was clean and strong. In the afternoons the Great Wall would be explored. Shanhaikwan is situated at the eastern end of the Wall and it is said\* that at its western end, almost two thousand miles away in Tibet, there is a stele which describes this mighty piece of architecture as "the most warlike barrier in the world"; but on a stone here (at Shanhaikwan) was a more modest inscription: "Heaven created the Seas and the Mountains". We used to collect all sorts of "treasures" in the form of glazed tiles in imperial yellow and odd pieces of stone and brickwork. It was a wonderful holiday.

Father's plans to join us were cancelled because of the growing tension in Europe. Up until the last moment, he was still coming — even his luggage had been sent on board the ship which was to bring him north. When war (World War I) was declared Mother decided that it was time for us to go home. We managed to travel again, fortunately, on *Cheong Shing* but a state of constant vigilance replaced the carefree mood of the outward journey. The ship was camouflaged — as were all other vessels we met — and simple black-out restrictions were observed; the light cruiser *Emden* had slipped out of the German naval base at Tsingtau. She had joined the armoured cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisau* under Vice-Admiral Graf von Spee in the China Sea and, until Japan entered the war, he had hoped to break through to

---

\* POIRIER, Rene "*The Fifteen Wonders of the World*", translated by Margaret Crosland, London, Victor Gollancy, 1960, page 65.

the Indian Ocean to molest allied shipping in that area. We younger ones, being ignorant of the situation, rather enjoyed the excitement but Captain Liddell was, I am sure, tremendously relieved when he finally made the port of Hong Kong.

## SCHOOL — DAYS

In February, 1917, immediately after the Chinese lunar New Year break, Grace and I joined Eva and Irene in their daily journey to and from the Diocesan Girls' School in Kowloon. Robbie, who had attended with them had now joined Queen's College, where Eddie was already at school. Although this meant a long day for us, Mother had had no hesitation in making the decision to send us across the harbour every day. There were alternatives, as for instance, the Peak School for young children, which was quite close by, being only a fifteen minute walk away but, as far as we were concerned, this was no real solution because no Chinese children were admitted. Our cousins went to St. Stephen's Girls' College on the island, not far from *Idlewild*. *Idlewild* was a gracious old house that had large rooms, with high ceilings, situated half way up the hillside on Seymour Road, in an old residential area on the edge of the early business centre of Victoria. The gardens and grounds were set on several levels, extending, to the right of and behind the house, into Robinson Road above. St. Stephen's was recognized as *the* school for daughters of Chinese gentlemen but instruction in English at this school was not, in Mother's opinion, of the standard that she had determined to be essential for her daughters. The same, she thought, applied to the French and Italian convent schools run by sisters of their respective religious denominations.

The Diocesan Girls' School is a grant-in-aid school. It began its life over a hundred years ago (having celebrated its hundredth birthday in 1960). It had had a chequered beginning. In 1899, however, it had opened at Rose Villa, so called because of the wealth of rambler roses covering its walls, a house in Bonham Road quite close to *Idlewild*. It was known at that time as the Diocesan School and Orphanage,



having been established by the Church Missionary Society for European and Eurasian girls, and Miss Elizabeth Skipton had come from England to be its first headmistress. By 1904 the school was prospering and is mentioned in the Government Report of that year as one of the five most important Grant-in-Aid schools in the colony.\* In 1903, Mother had wanted to send Vic to this school but her friends had been critical and had said: "Why do you want to send your daughter to an orphanage when her father can afford a proper school?" Mother had kept her own counsel and Vic had attended the orphanage as a day girl.

In 1913 the school moved across to Kowloon where space would allow of unhampered expansion in, at that time, rural surroundings. A site near King's Park had been selected, just over a mile from the "Star" ferry pier at Tsim-Tsa-Tsui (Kowloon Point). It was now more generally known as the Diocesan Girls' School, with the Bishop of Hong Kong as Chairman of the School Council. Miss Skipton was a dedicated woman who tempered a stern discipline with the warmth of a kind and gentle heart. She had a cat named "Fletty" to whom she was devoted and it is said that Fletty's opinion would be requested when there was any question of disciplinary action; it was Fletty who would determine the degree of penalty imposed. It was a well known fact that no matter at what hour Miss Skipton completed her duties she would never retire without first making a personal round, with small lamp in hand, of the dormitories, to see that each bed was occupied and every girl safely tucked in and asleep.

By the time we started schooling, some of the roads on the Peak had been improved to allow of light vehicular traffic and rickshaws had been introduced. Because of the hilly terrain of the district, each rickshaw was attended by two coolies — one, between the shafts, in the usual manner, to pull the vehicle, and the other remaining at the back, helping to push the rickshaw uphill or to apply a brake action when travelling downhill by a restraining pull at the rear. Father

---

\* Diocesan Girls' School Centenary Programme, "*The Story of the Diocesan Girls' School, 1860-1960*", by kind permission of Mrs C. J. Symons, Headmistress.

had brought home a seven-seater motor car, a Stutz, from Tsingtau in 1915. It was one of the first hundred cars in Hong Kong and had a registration number of 81, but naturally this could not be used on the Peak roads nor was there a motor road up to the Peak at that time.

On fine days Grace and I would ride our donkeys to the tram station but, if the weather was unsuitable, we would double up with Eva and Irene on the rickshaws. We rose at 6.30 a.m. and, because tiffin was many hours away, we were required to eat whether or not we felt so inclined, a breakfast of porridge, milk, eggs and bread. It would be quite a rush to collect our belongings: raincoats, overcoats, umbrellas — because of the distance and the long day, we had to be prepared for changes in weather conditions — and our school baskets. We had to be out of the house by 7.30 a.m. to catch the 7.45 tram. Hong Kong's funicular railway was still the only regular transport, carrying down to and up from the business centre at harbour level, all who lived on the Peak. It was a close rush. If we missed this early tram the next one at 8 o'clock would be too late for us to catch the Kowloon Ferry. We could not then get to school with any time to spare before the bell at ten minutes to nine. If we missed the 8 o'clock as well, as we occasionally did, we found it quicker to race down Peak Road — a steep and slippery path which ran alongside the Peak tram line.

We must have presented an unusual spectacle to our travelling companions on the Peak tram. Mother liked to dress us in pairs: Eva and Irene identically, then Grace and me, the only difference being that Eva and Grace usually had blue trimmings on their dresses and Irene and I had pink. Unfortunately she did not have much idea of how to dress us and, although our frocks were sometimes made by a dressmaker in town and there were two tailors permanently employed at home, I have since been told that our general appearance was a source of great amusement to our fellow travellers. And it is no wonder for I can remember wearing a voile dress trimmed with a pink ribbon in the middle of winter. This was reinforced it is true with a jaeger woollen singlet underneath, which had an annoying

habit of peeping out from under the voile neckline. To complete the incongruity of the *ensemble* I wore brown woollen stockings, held up by garters which were slack enough to allow proper circulation of blood to my legs, inside brown leather boots! Boots were considered necessary because they were "good support for our ankles". Hats, whether or not they suited us were always worn, these being substituted in the summer months by sun topees with embroidered linen covers, trimmed again with either pink or blue ribbon to match our dresses. Poor Mother, to have been so well-intentioned and to have achieved so unfortunate a result — we would not have been so conspicuous had there been only one or two of us but, with four and sometimes when going elsewhere there might be seven or eight in the family travelling together, we could not fail to attract a good deal of attention and comment. It was probably this sort of peculiarity which had prompted some of the unkind remarks of the other children when we were younger, although I am sure we would have been more appropriately attired when going out with Miss Hecht. By the time we went to school, however, she was about to be married. I do not know how the others felt; I had the great fortune to be blissfully unaware of being different from any one else. The only times I have felt embarrassed about my clothes were when, on arrival at school, one of the older girls would say "Here come the young Ho Tungs in Eva and Irene's old dresses." Remarks like this were not only unkind but totally unjustified because, even though the dresses were not new, they would always have been altered to look a little different by the tailors and invariably fitted us. Another thing that would draw critical comment would be if we turned up at school when the weather was bad. Mother never encouraged us to stay away if the weather looked threatening or merely if the typhoon signal had been hoisted. The day would often clear before the afternoon in any case. I think it provided the boarders with some amusement to stand and watch the day scholars arriving and, if most of them stayed away, the boarders would probably have been given a holiday. They hoped so anyway.

The Peak tram took not more than eight minutes to reach

the lower terminus and, with waiting time once we got on, the trip could not have lasted for more than fifteen minutes. Why, then, we could not have just sat and watched the passing landscape I would not know, but always, as children do, we looked for other amusement and either read or knitted. Parts of the route were very steep and if we were not careful our belongings would slide backwards under the seats. On one occasion Grace's basket had slid twice and had had to be retrieved, much to her chagrin and to the annoyance of the business people who were reading their morning papers behind her. Grace had been intent on her knitting and, as if losing her basket twice in one morning was not enough, her ball of wool rolled down the entire length of the first class compartment. This was viewed with strong disapproval and, to prevent a repetition, the gentleman who picked it up made her leave her knitting beside him until we reached the lower terminus.

A most upsetting experience, and one which I can never recall without feeling acute embarrassment, once happened to me. It must have been after Eva and Irene had left school because Grace and I had decided we would ride on the front row which was marked "These seats are reserved for His Excellency the Governor and his Staff". We had often travelled here because H.E. and his Staff seldom used the tram at this hour and, besides, we were on very friendly terms with the Peak Tram employees so that they would allow us to sit almost anywhere provided we behaved ourselves. When the tram is in motion, the brakesman always rides at the front end, that is, the end facing the upper levels. He has his back to the passengers on the uphill run and turns around to face them on the downward trip so that he always looks in the direction of the tram's progress. I had often watched him climb up at the warning bell to his position at the end of the front row of seats, release the hand brake by a downward pressure, and retain control of the brake lever with apparent ease throughout the journey by his own weight, half sitting on it. I was very anxious to be helpful so that when I saw him coming, I leant over to push down the brake lever to assist him, in much the same way as one would open a door for someone. Little did I think that by doing so I would release a very

strong spring. The brake lever jumped up with a loud crack. It required six men, using all their strength, to bring it down to its normal position and the tram was delayed a full twenty minutes. I received a few frowns, as I deserved, but no one spoke one word of reproof. I think I would have felt better had they done so. The incident haunted me for a long time — I was afraid also that someone would tell Father but apparently no one did.

Ten minutes by sedan chair from tram to ferry, ten minutes across the harbour and, in the early days, an uncle's rickshaws met us on the other side to take us to school. The distance from ferry to school was just over a mile but the route had only two turnings: a left-hand turn from Salisbury Road to tree-lined Nathan Road and a right-hand turn into Jordan Road on which our school was situated. How we welcomed those large banyan trees with their dangling fibres and aerial roots which, on touching the soil, thickened to form supporting pillars for the trunk. Many have been axed in the cause of progress, as double-decker buses of many routes traverse this arterial road today, but the trees were a real haven in the heat of summer each time our rickshaw passed under the shade of their leafy boughs.

The school year began in those days in September so that in February it had meant joining the class when it was half way through the year. I was placed for a trial period in Class 7. Some of the subjects were entirely new to me, for example, drawing, sewing and religious knowledge, but I was quite at home with the rest of the curriculum. Although I never learnt to draw as well nor sew as evenly as did the other girls in the class, having no previous instruction in these two subjects did not greatly handicap me. It was a different story in the case of religious knowledge for although at home we had always celebrated Christmas as a time of festivity and exchange of gifts, until I went to school, I had scarcely ever heard of the Christian faith. Moreover we had studied Chinese classics under the Old Master therefore we could not help but be influenced to a large degree by the Confucian philosophy. Mother, however, was a devout Buddhist and the custom of ancestral "worship" was observed in our household. It was an unusual background

but it says much for Mother's remarkable parental zeal that she elected, under these circumstances, to send us to a missionary school where strict adherence to Christian teaching demanded the first session of each day to be devoted to Scripture, and we were at a most impressionable age. Somehow I survived that first term and was placed sixth in a class of about fifteen at the end-of-the-year-examinations in July.

Although the Great War was still being fought in Europe the German Navy had ceased to be a threat to allied shipping in the Far East since early 1915. My parents, with Vic and Eddie, had spent that summer in Tsingtau, the former German naval base now occupied by the Japanese, and my youngest sister, Florence, had been born there. They found in Tsingtau a splendid seaside resort and had formed a firm friendship with an excellent German physician, Dr. Paul Weischer, and his wife Margaret. They sailed again for Tsingtau early in the summer of 1917, leaving Vic to bring us as soon as school holidays permitted. We had another wonderfully relaxing vacation which turned out to be our last trip up north for many years.

On our return to school in September we found that a new wing had been added. The lower school, from the three divisions of Class 8 up to Class 6 to which I was now promoted, was housed in this wing. It was at right angles to the old building and held four classrooms and a cloakroom for the day scholars downstairs, and several dormitories on the upper level. Our class mistress was a Miss Day but, for some reason, we had to join Class 5 for scripture lessons and this was taken by Miss N. Bascombe. Miss Bascombe was a highly intelligent person, an excellent teacher of mathematics to senior girls but she had little patience with younger ones especially if they did not know their work. She had a little notebook in which she kept records of poor performances and one felt that, at all cost, one must try to keep one's name from being entered in this book. At her class one morning, I was asked to repeat the Catechism (we had been told to learn by heart the Catechism from the beginning up to the end of the Creed). I was completely unable to do this and, in fact, I did not even know what the Catechism was or where we had to learn it

from. The inevitable happened: my name went into her little notebook and I had to write out the passage six times during the following weekend.

Sunday happened to be sunny but cool, far too pleasant to spend indoors, so I decided to write my "lines" in the garden. I was getting on quite well when some friends called to see us and I was detailed to cut some flowers for them. Leaving my work, I welcomed the short distraction but was greatly dismayed to find, on my return, that the donkey, Jeremy, had wandered over from where he should have been grazing, and had eaten all the pages I had so laboriously copied. How was I to face Miss Bascombe in the morning? I set to work once again but, although I wrote until midnight, I could only complete the passage four times. With thumping heart I asked Miss Bascombe for extra time. After hearing my story she sniffed and walked away. I heard afterwards that she had asked Eva "What is this preposterous tale which Jean tells me about the donkey eating her catechism?" When Eva confirmed that this was true, I was excused further penalty.

The year 1918 was a memorable one. On a typical spring morning on 4th April, Vic was married to M.K. (later Sir Man Kam) Lo. Although he was destined to be one of Hong Kong's most notable citizens, he was always "M.K." to his friends. He never lost that charm and modesty of manner inherent in his nature. At this time he was a young and handsome solicitor, son of an old friend of Father's, and had just returned from England. He had won the Blue Ribbon—First in the First Class Honours of the Solicitors' Final Examination—and was to practise law in Hong Kong. He was reputed to be a fine tennis player and, later, with his brother, M. W. Lo, was to win the Hong Kong doubles championship on more than one occasion. He had been up to visit us frequently since his return, conducting his courtship in a most proper manner and teaching the rest of the family to play tennis. Naturally we younger ones were only admitted as "ball" boys and girls.

The wedding provided great excitement. It was *the* social event of the year and was attended by H.E. the Governor, Sir Henry May, and his wife Lady May. Irene was maid of honour and Grace and I were bridesmaids. We had the most lovely

pink gorgette dresses trimmed with silver lace, made by a French dressmaker, with hats and pink shoes and socks to match. We carried baskets of pink rosebuds. The bridgroom's presents to Grace and me were little gold brooches, set with a small sapphire with tiny pearls at each side. It was a great thrill.

At the end of the year extensive alterations were made to the Peak tram line. While this was going on, the daily journey to and from school became impossible for us, and therefore we had a term as boarders in the school. We fitted in well with the school routine and many hours of travel were saved. It was rather strange, though, to have to go to bed each night at 7 p.m. after a light meal of weak tea and brown bread with margarine or dripping—because of the war in Europe the import of butter was still restricted—and/or jam or treacle. At home opportunity was taken at this time to have electric supply installed at *The Chalet* and *Dunford*.

Mother did her best to help us keep up our Chinese studies as homework and the long hours spent in travelling did not encourage any effort to be made with the new teacher at home. A tutor was therefore engaged to give us an hour's lesson at the school at four o'clock each day. This was unfortunately rather a waste of time and of money because the tutor was rather easy going and, as the subject was not included in the school curriculum, we did not bother ourselves to give it the attention it merited. This inattention I was later to regret.

And so I gradually moved through the senior school, enjoying my studies, playing in the hockey team and having an occasional game of tennis when opportunity allowed. We spent an extra year in Class 4 because a subdivision—Class Upper 4—had been introduced in the previous year but, as we were well up to standard, we were allowed to skip Class 3 in the year which followed. Our only loss in this exchange was the Lugard Scholarship, the only scholarship in the school open to competition, because of a decision by the school Council not to award it in 1921 as there had not been a Class 3.

In 1921 Miss Skipton retired and returned to England after having been Headmistress for 22 years. She was succeeded by Miss Ferguson who was known and loved by us all. Unfor-



tunately her term was short for she died in 1925 but, while she was in office, she took a keen interest in social activities, stimulated the co-operation of parents and gave the school its motto "Daily Giving Service".

In 1922 we entered our Junior year, that is, we were to sit the Hong Kong University Junior Examinations in December; by this time the school year had been altered to follow the calendar year. We were introduced to algebra and geometry which, together with arithmetic, formed the combined subject of mathematics at the examination. Other science subjects were taught only at schools for boys; girls receiving instead instruction in domestic science. Towards the middle of the year, Miss H. D. Sawyer joined the staff and became our class mistress. She had come to us from Poona in India and had a reputation for being a good teacher in English. By this time the class had dwindled to six, but in spite of the small number it took Miss Sawyer some time to get accustomed to us. She was inclined to be high-handed and, although we were by no means undisciplined, we would not stand for autocratic rule in the classroom. Things came to a head when she reported two of the class to Miss Ferguson who reprimanded them in front of the school and sent them up to her office for disciplinary action immediately following morning prayers. Even I was told how ashamed my Mother and sisters would be did they but know that I had misbehaved. We went into a state of passive resistance and virtually sent Miss Sawyer to Coventry. After forty-eight hours of this she could stand it no longer and apologized, with which she won our respect, our co-operation and our love. She took us through to matriculation level. Never had the history class been so interesting. We had done British history all the way through school, from the time of the early Britons and Anglo-Saxons, through Roman and Norman invasion, to the Stuart, Tudor and Hanoverian kings. Miss Sawyer introduced a new interest: she took us to witness the French Revolution, with the Fall of the Bastille in 1789, to the Congress of Vienna in 1815. A brief period in years, as far as history goes, but some of the most exciting and eventful in Europe.

Although I was under Miss Sawyer for less than two years

she made a deep impression on me and I owe her a very real sense of gratitude. At Miss Ferguson's death she was appointed Headmistress and, under her leadership during the next fourteen years, the school won high repute throughout the Far East. It is pleasing to note here that, at the school's centenary celebrations in 1960, Miss Sawyer and her two successors returned to Hong Kong as guests of the Old Girls' Association to join in paying tribute to the school.

At the examinations held at the University at the end of 1923, even though I had passed with distinction in English and Biblical Knowledge, I was not qualified to matriculate because I did not obtain a pass in Chinese. At the same time, my friend and classmate, Kathleen Grose, matriculated having only passed in the same subjects as I had done. The situation arose because I was Chinese and, as such, Chinese was a compulsory subject for matriculation whereas, for Kathleen, there was no such pre-requisite. Miss Sawyer was most indignant at this "unfair" view taken by the University authorities and went up to plead my cause, pointing out that Chinese was not a subject taught in the school syllabus and, moreover, I was no more Chinese than was Kathleen Grose. But a rule was a rule and the authorities would not relax the regulation so that whilst Kathleen went on to do Medicine at the University, I was left rather at a loose end with my regrets. I would have loved to have had another year at school, and Miss Sawyer was anxious that I should do so, but nothing would persuade Mother that I was not needed to assist her at home. I did, however, return to school once a week to attend guide meetings and I retained Miss Sawyer's warm friendship.

## WE JOIN THE GIRL GUIDES

When we first joined the Diocesan Girls' School I would notice with interest that on certain days some of the girls would be dressed in a dark blue uniform. They were called Girl Guides. Miss Day was their Captain. After Miss Day's departure from the school the uniforms disappeared and it was to be some years later before Miss Rachel Irving, daughter of the then Director of Education, revived interest in this organization.

I am not sure whether the early group had the same identification but the reformed group, which Grace and I joined in 1921, was known as the 2nd Kowloon Company. Miss Irving's sister, Miss Hope Irving, captained the 1st Kowloon at our rival school, the Kowloon (later Central) British, in nearby Nathan Road.

The Prince of Wales's visit to Hong Kong in April of 1921 had stimulated the interest of many young people. There had been a large welcome rally of scouts and guides for him at Government House. Furthermore a sedan chair with side panels of crimson tribute satin, on which his crest of ostrich feathers was embroidered in silver brocade, had been specially made for him, and in this chair he was carried to ceremonial functions all over the colony. At the end of his visit the Prince of Wales had asked that the panels on his chair be presented to the scouts and the guides, to be made into banners. These were to be competed for annually and awarded to the best troop or company of the year. Thus began the annual Prince of Wales Banner competitions which were held, in various forms, until the second world war.

I cannot understand why we had not joined before, as we were both so keen. It was possibly because we already had a well-filled programme and it just had not occurred to us that

we might have been allowed to add on an extra load. But, to our surprise and delight, Mother herself now made the suggestion that we might become guides and, once we did, we took things very seriously and looked forward to the weekly meetings from one Tuesday to the next.

There were four patrols in our company: Forget-me-not, Pansy, Poppy, and Violet. Grace became a tenderfoot (a recruit) in the Pansy patrol and I joined the Forget-me-nots. Each patrol had a leader and a second and from four to six girls so that the maximum strength of the company was thirty-two. As soon as we passed our tenderfoot tests we were allowed to wear our badges — the brass trefoil representing the three promises — with our uniforms. The trefoils had to be brightly polished and proudly we would don our uniforms each Tuesday morning in preparation for the meeting after school in the afternoon. We used frequently to meet our Captain on the Peak tram. Miss Irving was doing an Arts course at the University, where women students had recently been admitted. She used to board the tram at its first stop at Barker's Road. We would be on the look out for her and, as soon as she entered, up Grace and I would jump, stand to attention, and give her the three-fingered salute as we had been taught to do. Poor Miss Irving would blush and, because she would be in mufti, would return a half salute. This went on until one day she remarked that, as the line at Barker's Road station was so very steep, jumping up at that point in order to give her a regular salute made us and her rather conspicuous. So she suggested that we should merely say "Good morning, Captain" instead. Over the summer holidays, even though there were no meetings, we prepared for our tests for the second class badge. One of the projects was to make a description of the life of six things for which we kept daily records of silk worms, butterfly caterpillars, Chinese bean sprouts and the like. It was great fun.

After passing our second class tests we went in for proficiency badges and, before long, our sleeves were decorated with a variety of little emblems of proficiency. We earned badges for first aid, home nursing, child nursing, health and swimming, as well as the needlewoman's and toymaker's and

others. Miss Irving suggested that we worked for the naturalist's badge over the summer holidays in 1922. The project required a collection of sixty different kinds of flora. "Sixty different kinds?" said I, "we wouldn't be able to find so many in a year!" "What? Not on the Peak?" Captain replied. "You just haven't looked. Try using your eyes. *Never* say you can't until you have tried." We kept our eyes open and found sixty and more with ease. We pressed the specimens and stuck them on to the pages of a large drawing book. There was no cellulose tape in those days; things were a little different to what they are now. Naturally we could identify only a few of the varieties of wild flowers and ferns but Miss Irving helped us and what she didn't know herself, she asked at the University. One badge I never acquired was the cook's. I attended a series of classes and arrangements were made for the test. I am ashamed to say that I shirked the examination at the last moment. Surely this presaged a lifetime of unreasonable fear and strange distaste for this most useful of accomplishments? Above all, we learnt to be resourceful and self-reliant, lessons which I have had reason to appreciate, for the early development of this approach to problems was to stand me in good stead, not only throughout internment but also in the years to come.

Both Grace and I earned our stripes within a year and in due course became leaders in our patrols. My one big disappointment was to have been in London and to have been unable, because of my operation, to represent Hong Kong at the first world camp held at Foxlease in the summer of 1924. Grace left the movement when she left school at the end of 1925 but I was to remain with the company as senior patrol leader, ranger, lieutenant and finally as captain. It was to be my great good fortune when I was lieutenant to marry the scout-master of the "Roving Fifth", Billy Gittins. My guides and his scouts formed a guard-of-honour along the entrance drive to *Idlewild*. In spite of her opposition to our marriage, Mother told me that she thought the guard-of-honour made our wedding the best of all the family weddings.

In late April of 1929 I took over the captaincy of our company. It was to be a most rewarding year and, before

retiring to prepare for the advent of my first child, Elizabeth, we were able to bring into fruition two of my fondest dreams. We used originally to have our meetings at St. Andrew's Church Hall and, although with the acquisition by the school of a new playground adjoining its west wall, we now held them at the school, we still did not possess a "home". Miss Sawyer, who had always been the kindest of patrons and the staunchest of friends, now came forward with the generous offer of a corner of the new playground if we could raise the necessary funds to build our own hut. By a concentrated effort we raised the money, and our headquarters was in use by the end of the year. My second dream was to take the company out camping and, with Billy's help, this was also fulfilled. Six weeks before Elizabeth was born, a camp was held jointly with his scouts in the hills behind our house in Kowloon Tong. My guides and I slept on heaps of straw in an unfurnished house which had been lent to us, thereby adhering to the regulation of not camping under canvas, but this was the only concession made to urban living. The scouts pitched tents in the grounds nearby. All cooking was done in the open and campfires were lit each night.

Because of the variety and number of other interests for young people, the importance of the scout and guide movements tends nowadays to be obscured. At that time, however, they played an enormous part in, and in no small way influenced, the lives of many of us.

## AN UNEXPECTED TRIP TO LONDON

Throughout my schooldays and particularly in the later years I had been troubled with periodic and quite inexplicable headaches. It was thought that these were the result of pressure on a nerve by the lump behind my ear, said to be a compact osteoma, which had appeared after my accidental collision with a cyclist when a child; but there was no proof of this. All that was certain was that the growth was slowly increasing in size and a distinct indentation could be seen on the inside band of my school hat. The doctor had given a standing order that whenever the headaches came on, I was to go to bed and any outstanding homework should be left undone. Miss Sawyer had been quite agreeable to this as she was most sympathetic.

After leaving school at the end of 1923 I spent several months at home quietly helping Mother. The headaches continued to trouble me and, in fact, appeared to be more frequent. Possibly without the distraction of school activities, I became more conscious of them and Mother decided that the time had come for a thorough investigation to be made.

I was taken to see the Professor of Surgery in his department at the Government Civil Hospital. After examining the X-ray photographs, Professor K. H. Digby, of the Ho Tung Chair of Clinical Surgery, advised removal of the growth although, he said, there was no immediate urgency as the tumour was growing outwards and the possibility of brain involvement even in the future would be slight. Father was in London for the British Empire Exhibition at the time and, when he was informed of Professor Digby's opinion, agreed to the operation without hesitation.

Eddie had just graduated Bachelor of Arts in Commerce at the University and was booked to leave Hong Kong almost immediately to join Father. Mother suddenly became worried

and felt that, although she had every confidence in Professor Digby's skill, it would be a great pity if opportunity were not taken to send me over for specialist treatment. Cables were sent back and forth. Mother was obviously anxious for me to go; Father, on the other hand, was understandably hesitant to accept responsibility for arranging the operation in London. He finally gave his consent and I sailed with Eddie on the Japanese steamer *Kashima Maru* on 4th June, 1924.

We had only a weekend in which to get ready and there was not the time to prepare a suitable wardrobe. I was so excited about going that I would not have minded in the least if I had nothing new, but the tailors ran up two or three cotton frocks, and one of Irene's evening dresses, the simplest of white gowns, rather high waisted and with a wide, square neckline, was altered to fit me. I had never been out at night, although Eddie's friends had taught us to dance, but Mother thought it appropriate that I should have at least one dress suitable for special occasions which might arise on board ship. Vic came up to pack my things and, even though my wardrobe was so limited, I went off with a cabin trunk and several suit cases. Mother sent on board a case of "Bear" brand tinned milk, with which we were to supplement the ship's diet, but the ship's meals were excellent and adequate, and neither Eddie nor I touched the milk. Indeed we wondered what we should do with it until we heard of the illness of one of the children. The case was offered and accepted. The touching gratitude of the mother, on the child's recovery, left no doubt that the milk had proved a real godsend.

The ship had been heavily booked and I was fortunate to get a berth. There was a number of University people travelling on her: the Professor of English, Professor R. K. M. Simpson, M.C., with Mrs. Simpson and their four-year-old daughter Margery; Professor C. Y. Wang of Pathology, with Mrs. Wang and two small boys, Hay-Yin aged four and Hay-Sing of two; Professor M. H. Roffey of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Mrs. Roffey; and Professor W. J. Hinton of Economics, with Mrs. Hinton and their infant son, whose cabin I shared. Amongst the other passengers were a Japanese prince, Marquis K. Kuni and his aide, Count T. Sano; a Danish tele-



communications expert, Mr. S. Hansen, and many more, together with fifteen other children. The youngsters followed me everywhere. This pleased and rather flattered me and at times I must have felt the satisfaction of the Pied Piper himself. I was particularly fond of Margery Simpson and of Hay-Yin Wang and there was a Norwegian boy of eight, his name was Olaf, who stayed beside me all the time like a faithful dog.

As Eddie had friends in Kuala Lumpur and as he wanted to see something of the country, he left the ship at Singapore to rejoin it at Penang. I was left in the care of the Simpsons and we all spent the night ashore at the home of their friends, Major and Mrs. C. E. Bone. It was a very pleasant change from the ship and a good deal cooler, air-conditioning on a ship was, at that time, an unheard-of luxury. In Penang we visited the snake temple — hundreds of slimy, writhing invertebrates, hanging from window ledges, over door jams, climbing up the legs of chairs and even on the altar table — it was quite a hair-raising sight. We had a ride on the cable tram which was not unlike our own Peak tram in Hong Kong.

The next port of call was Colombo and Eddie and I went for a drive up the hills of Kandy with the Wangs. We stayed the night in a hotel by the side of the lake and, as it was a warm moonlit night, we went out on a boat after dinner and were rowed across the lake. Professor Wang said it reminded him of the Lake District in England which I should make a point of visiting. He thought Grasmere was the most beautiful place in the world.

On the long stretch between Colombo and Suez we played many deck games. A small canvas swimming pool had been erected and an afternoon of competitive sport was held on deck at which I won both the egg-and-spoon and the chopsticks races. Travel pamphlets on Cairo were distributed and a trip was proposed. The plan was to leave the ship at Suez, travel by train to Cairo and to rejoin it at Port Said, spending two nights in Cairo. I think the all-inclusive fare was £10 (ster.). We had the rare experience of riding on camels to visit the Sphinx and the Pyramids of Gizeh which housed the ancient Egyptian tombs and into which we were permitted to enter. There was a conducted tour of the excellent museum; the hotel accom-

modation left nothing to be desired. Tourism was obviously a highly developed industry even in those days.

Going through the Mediterranean we passed close enough to Sicily to see Mount Etna glowing like a beacon in the evening sky and, before Marseilles was reached, the Captain gave a farewell dinner, after which a dance was held on the decorated promenade deck. I wore my evening dress for the first time and I think that it looked quite nice. At the dance, Count Sano came to me and, with a deep and ceremonious bow, asked if I would be good enough to dance with the prince. I was naturally very thrilled. I found Marquis Kuni to be, as he had been throughout the voyage, very shy and he spoke English hesitantly but he told me he was a member of the scout movement — he had probably noticed the trefoil badge which I sometimes wore — so this gave us a common interest. Two years later when he passed through Hong Kong on his way home to Japan, Father and I were invited to lunch with him and Count Sano at the Hong Kong Hotel. I have since wondered what part he played in the second world war. By that time he would have been in his forties and too old to have been a fighter pilot.

From Marseilles we travelled by train to Paris, leaving our heavy luggage to go on by sea. We had three absolutely fascinating days in Paris, packed in a manner which only the young and very enthusiastic can endure and yet enjoy. Mr. Hansen had joined us so we made a small party of three. The Normandy Hotel had been recommended. We were told that they specialized in looking after people who spoke no French, and they lived up to their reputation. We arrived in the late afternoon and Eddie asked at the desk about shows. "The Folies-Bergère," they said, "is perhaps a little too sophisticated for the young lady, but the Casino-de-Paris can be well recommended." When we went upstairs to change Eddie said to me: "Hadn't you better put up your hair?" I wore it long in those days, tied at the nape of the neck with a black satin ribbon, and the curls hanging down my back. "Whatever for?" I asked, although it was quite obvious to me what he meant. "I will go as I am," I added, "the evening dress will show that I am not a child."

The next morning we visited the Palace of Versailles which

was of special interest to me because we had done that period in European history, and the afternoon was spent exploring the galleries at the Louvre. We saw, amongst other things, such famed exhibits as the *Venus de Milo* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and I bought postcard sized reproductions of many of the great works of art, but the Louvre is too large a place to be fully appreciated in one short afternoon. That night Mr. Hansen took us to the opera where we saw *Tales of Hoffmann*. It was my first experience at an opera and I don't think I have since enjoyed any other as much as this, not that I have been to more than half-a-dozen altogether. On the following morning we joined a party for a bus tour to the forest of Fontainebleau and was shown through the magnificent palace. We then went on to see something of the battlefields of the first world war. Here the blackened skeletons of trees killed by poison gas and row upon row of crosses in allied and German cemeteries brought home to me some of the stark realities of the then modern warfare. It had been a very long day and night had fallen when we returned to the hotel. Mr. Hansen took his leave of us with regret; he was going home to Denmark the next morning.

On our last day we went up the Eiffel tower, and looked around the Paris that we now felt we knew. We saw the *Arc de Triomphe* and visited Notre Dame Cathedral where the finer details of classical Gothic architecture were pointed out to us. Coffee and rolls at a sidewalk cafe and a last drive along the tree-lined avenue Champs-Élysées and through the Tuileries gardens ended a happy and most memorable visit for me. I retired early for on the next day we were due for Calais, Dover and London. At Dover I had the rather mortifying experience of having to face an irate immigration officer without my passport — I had never before had occasion to show a passport either in China or for re-entry into Hong Kong and had thoughtlessly packed it away in my trunk which was being sent on by sea. It was fortunate that Eddie managed to talk our way out of this predicament as Father was to meet the boat train at the London end.

London in July was warm, dusty and rather sultry; there was none of the pregnant excitement of the spring that one

reads about nor of the colourful magnificence of the autumn months. Father had taken a rented house, one of a terraced row, in Rutland Gate within walking distance of Hyde Park and of Harrods. The house was narrow fronted and had five levels, each containing two fair-sized rooms and an annex. He had hired a car — a 1913 model Rolls Royce, complete with chauffeur. It was said that the pre-war models were far superior to the gleaming post-war cars. Father was very pre-occupied with the Exhibition at Wembley and we were soon taken in and shown around. There was a section specially for Hong Kong to display its then small array of industrial products, and a restaurant where Chinese food was served. I used to have lunch there each time I visited the exhibition for I was beginning to miss Chinese food more than I missed my Mother and, besides, the meals there could be charged to Father's account. I spent many hours both before and after the operation at the palaces of science and of industry. I loved to visit the pavilion showing the Queen's Doll's House and was particularly taken with its miniature guardsmen, complete with busby and red jacket. I took the opportunity of seeing something of the displays of the other parts of the Empire and had many a thrill on the switchbacks and giant racers in the huge amusement park.

Arrangements were soon made for my operation which was performed by an orthopaedic surgeon, Mr. Peter Daniel. I entered Miss Parke's nursing home in Beaumont Street and was looked after by Miss Mary Peters, with whom I have maintained a forty-year friendship interrupted only by the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. We used to write to one another at Christmas time each year, but I had lost her address with the rest of my possessions when Hong Kong fell to the Japanese and she must have wondered how I had fared. After the war, a letter was sent from Melbourne to the postmaster in Dundee, where I knew she had retired, and the old association was restored. Miss Peters had been most kind when I was in hospital, spending all her spare time reading to me for, during the first week, at least, I was able to lie only on my left side. She must have had a collection of the entire works of Kipling, for she produced and read through an incredible number of his books.

These included "Stalky and Co.", "Soldiers Three", "Captains Courageous", "Kim", "Just So Stories", "Actions and Reactions", and others, but our favourites were the two "Jungle Tales". We had a happy meeting when I visited Scotland in 1956.

Because of being in bed with the operation, and subsequent recuperation period, I did not see as much of London as one might have expected; but a visit was made to Madame Tussaud's to see the waxwork figures and we had a wonderful day at the zoological gardens at Whipsnade. Eddie and I attended divine service at St. Paul's Cathedral. We went twice to the theatre: to see Gladys Cooper at a *matinée* show and to a musical comedy in the evening, based on an *affaire d'amour* of Madame de Pompadour. A group of student friends took us punting on the Thames on a perfect Sunday afternoon and one evening we visited Professor Simpson's sister, Mrs. H. Y. Gibson at Sunbury-on-Thames, where I had the thrill of listening for the first time to a radio broadcast through the medium of headphones attached to a crystal set built by the Gibson boys. This was long before radios became normal household equipment.

By this time the date set for our return to Hong Kong was fast approaching and Eddie had managed to persuade Father to let him remain in England. I was desperately anxious to stay too. I knew that Father was rather keen for me to take up journalism as a career so I begged to be allowed to train in London. He agreed to give it serious consideration if suitable guardianship could be arranged. As far as I was concerned, this problem had already been resolved because his old friend Sir James Stewart Lockhart had offered to act in this capacity and Lady Lockhart had invited me to make my home with them. However, after a good deal of thought, and at the last moment, Father felt that he could not make such a decision without first speaking with Mother. His negative reply was definite and final. "But" he conceded "if your Mother will let you, you could come back next year." I knew then that an opportunity had been lost; learning at the same time the lesson that opportunities once lost can never be recaptured. As things have turned out, and as it so often happens in life, this was for the best; otherwise, as Sir James pointed out in a letter he sent with his wedding present to us, I would not have studied at Hong Kong

University nor would Billy and I have been planning marriage. At the time, though, I was bitterly disappointed.

Father had friends in Dumfries and, before leaving for Hong Kong, I motored with him up to Scotland for a brief visit. We travelled by way of Sheffield and Leeds and stayed the night at Harrogate. At Dumfries we visited Sir Robert Jardine of Jardine, Matheson & Co. an old friend and business associate of Hong Kong, who was a semi-invalid and had long since retired. A day was spent with the Keswicks, another Jardine family, in their country estate. I remember listening with rapt attention to conversations of pheasant and grouse shooting and of fishing for salmon and trout. The Keswicks had wanted us to stay with them but Father did not wish to put them to the trouble and thought it better to spend the two nights at the local hotel instead. We returned to London via the Lake District, with only a passing glimpse of the exquisite beauty of Grasmere but a night was spent beside the peaceful waters of Lake Windermere before continuing the journey south.

Lisbon was next on our programme and we were soon on our way. Leaving Paris by train, we crossed the Pyrenees at night and, with my sleeping berth being at the far end of the long transcontinental train, I was almost taken to Madrid instead. Unaware that there was this possibility I slept on in carefree ignorance but someone must have remembered at the last moment because at five o'clock the next morning, I was hurriedly bundled out of my carriage into the Lisbon section in which I arrived at our destination without further incident late the same afternoon.

Lisbon's hilly, cobble-stoned streets reminded me of Hong Kong's neighbouring Portuguese colony of Macau, which must have been built by the early colonials after the style of their mother country. The weather too was not unlike that of Macau. There was a reception in Father's honour where we met a lot of important people and at which he was received by the President who thanked him for his services to Portugal. I spent most of the afternoon in a secluded corner in deep conversation with an Irish catholic priest, discussing, amongst more general topics, such serious matters as Chinese philosophy, ancestral worship and missionary work in the Far East. I doubt that

anything I said was original but he seemed to be interested in my points of view. On the following day, which was a Sunday, we were taken to watch a bullfight. I found this a most interesting experience in spite of the fact that I could neither understand nor appreciate the finer details of the sport. The arena was some distance out of town and seemed to be much larger than I had expected. The crowds filled the spacious stands to overflowing and became wildly excited, as people of the Latin races do. The long drive gave us an opportunity to see a little of the surrounding country, the women washing their clothes by the side of the river without regard for the sabbath was a further reminder of the east.

Leaving the Iberian Peninsula we traversed by car France's Riviera in perfect autumn sunshine. Deep blue skies and mile after mile of a deeper blue sea flashed by as we drove through Cannes to Monte Carlo where we were to spend the night. Father had wanted me to see the famous Casino but there was some question as to whether, being a minor, I would be admitted. After some argument, and on Father's personal guarantee that I would not partake of the gambling facilities, a concession was granted. I am afraid I rather offended him by remarking that I would not have minded not going in because I could not understand the game anyway. He had considered the visit to be a part of my education.

And so we went on to Nice and Genoa where we boarded the German ship *Coblentz* for Hong Kong. The voyage was pleasantly uneventful as we retraced our journey eastwards. Not having suffered personal losses in the first world war I felt an interest in, rather than animosity for, the German people on board ship. I learnt to appreciate German food and to speak a few words of their language. At the same time more than one of my travelling companions remarked on the happy product they saw in me of a dual upbringing: contrary to Kipling's theory, they said, west had met east, and the twain had become unified. Just before our arrival in Hong Kong an elderly lady, whose good opinion I valued, wrote words to this effect in my autograph album, and I blushed with a pride I rarely felt for my heritage.

## I STUDY THE CLASSICS

Having failed to gain entry into the University of Hong Kong because of an inadequacy in my knowledge of Chinese literature, it was now necessary that this be made good. In 1925, therefore, I began a two-year period at Sheung Fu School, where the standard of education offered was considered to be one of the highest in Hong Kong. I was getting on for seventeen years and, on entry, was placed in the first year of the "middle" school. This meant working with girls two years or more my junior in age, which in itself was somewhat mortifying but I found, in addition, that my knowledge was possibly a further two years behind that of the other girls. I had of course been introduced to elementary classics by the Old Master, and had learnt a fair portion of the "Four Books"\*, but this had happened a long time ago and I am sure that I knew less of Chinese literature in 1925 than I had known in 1917. I would not have wished to be placed in a lower form — it was bad enough to have to work with girls two years younger than myself, but to descend further to sub-middle-school level was unthinkable. The only alternative was sheer hard work.

The school day, including Saturdays; lasted from nine o'clock until four in the afternoon, with an hour for lunch which I had at *Idlewild*. Everything was taught in Chinese. In subjects like calligraphy, arithmetic, and drawing, I managed easily and even had my work placed on the display board at times. I could cope also with the history and geography presented in a different form. It was in the more advanced work that I met real trouble, books like "Shu Ching" (classic of

---

\* "Four Books": a group of classics consisting of "Great Learning", "Central Harmony", "Analects" (aphorisms of Confucius), and "Meng Tzu" (Book of Mencius).



documents) and "Li Chi" (book of rituals). Difficulties to a lesser degree were found in classes devoted to the study of more general literature, for example, the collected essays of ancient writers, two of which I still remember vividly. One was a long letter written by a general exiled to outer Mongolia. In this he expresses in the most heart-rending terms his nostalgia for his native land and goes on to describe the pitiful bleakness of the desert, the shriek of icy wind blasts in autumn and the hungry howls of wild beasts of prey. The second was an exhortation made by the mayor of Fukien province to the crocodiles, sharks, whales and other "monsters" of the sea which at that time infested the entire south China coast and posed a threat to his people. He offered an elaborate sacrifice to placate these monsters and then sped them on their way to the southern oceans with an injunction that should they ever dare return to the north, they would risk the wrath of heaven for evermore. In addition to these "Ancient Essays" there were others written at a later, more romantic period, to be learnt. These were written in a style that was half prose and half poetry and were known as the "four-six" essays. Their language had an euphony of tone and rhythm of their own, many of which were elegiac in character and couched in a minor key. Once learnt, they stayed in one's memory and I can still recite fairly long passages from one which mourns the distance of a thousand *lis*\* that lie between two friends who nevertheless share the same autumn moon, and from another called "Parting Lament", these being two of the better known amongst them. Lastly, once a week on Saturdays, we would study the anthology of poems from the T'ang dynasty, this long and happy period of Chinese history (618-907 A.D.) in which art and culture thrived, known as the "golden age". It was all rather a struggle but, in spite of this, one could not fail to appreciate the simplicity of style and sentiment of some of the four- or eight-lined stanzas, each line consisting of a set five or seven words. For instance, to show by literal translation, the essential Chinese word order, here is one of the simplest and best loved of the T'ang poems:

---

\* The *li* varies between 1350 and 1750 feet.

“Last year, this day, in this door,  
Man’s face, peach bloom, both reflect pink.  
Man’s face — not know which place go;  
Peach bloom — as yore, smiles (at) spring wind.”\*

But it was not merely a case of appreciating or of understanding the new work that was now set before me. Every passage, after the text had been explained and all the implied references noted, had yet to be committed to memory in our spare time, so that selected passages could be quoted in writing, and without the help of dictation, at the next session. I had not been schooled in this manner of study but it is claimed that the only way to develop a good style in writing is to memorize good literature. All I could do was to set myself a rigid routine, working until eleven o’clock each night and rising at six the following morning to finish what I was too tired to learn the night before. In this way I kept up with the day to day pace but the problem of examinations loomed ever ahead. I think that this is when I first learnt, and later so unfortunately lost, that wonderful asset, a faith which can “move mountains”. I prayed each night that I would make the grade. It seemed to be an impossible task, but my prayers were answered.

The general strike of 1925 caused great inconvenience and affected all workers in the entire colony. All public services and transport came to a standstill and domestic staff left their employment. Our servants, some of whom had been with us for many years, and who did not belong to the unions anyway, did not leave us but they had been threatened and were afraid to venture out of their rooms. Eva and Irene drove Father to work and went for the provisions, and we younger ones did the housework. We learnt to cook rice and to make soya bean curd under the direction of the cook who was careful to remain out of sight. Finally the strike was settled, M. K. Lo being one of the Hong Kong delegation to go to Canton with a view of reaching a compromise and, because all the schools were closed on account of the strike, I received a reprieve from the mid-year examinations. By the year’s end, I had caught up enough to be placed second in the class.

---

\* Author’s translation.

I was promoted to the second year at the resumption of school after the lunar new year in 1926. Grace had by this time left the Diocesan Girls' School and now joined me in Chinese studies. One day in early September, we met Mr. (later Professor of Education) L. Forster, Registrar of the University, on the Peak tram. He told us that the regulation for a compulsory pass in Chinese had been modified and, if we applied to the University, we could be admitted as undergraduates in the following year. This was excellent news indeed. Grace left Sheung Fu School immediately to reinforce her matriculation subjects and I stayed on until it was time to attend the Guide Officers' Training Camp at Shekko at the end of the year.

## TWO EVENTFUL YEARS

The years 1927-28 saw many changes. Late in 1926 Mother had left for England with Eva and Irene. They had completed their degree courses in the University, Eva having graduated in medicine and Irene in arts and were now to proceed to further studies overseas. As for other members of the family, Daisy had been married in Shanghai and now lived there. Eddie was home from England but he had married over there an Irish girl and there had been a grave rift within the family. Father was angry and upset, especially as the marriage had taken place when he was in England for the second year of the Wembley Exhibition in 1925 and he had been neither consulted nor even informed. Mother was bitterly disappointed — Eddie was her favourite child and she was now faced with this dreadful split between husband and son. She turned to her religion for solace and became, as time went on, more and more devout. Robbie was already in England, undergoing training at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich — “The Shop”. It therefore fell to my lot to be in charge of the household when Mother went away. Grace and I were now undergraduates and Florence was still at school.

Although I was in charge, this was only nominal because things were really run by our staff of good and trusted servants. All I had to do was to sign the orders for money, pay the staff which, including gardeners and the few remaining chair coolies (with the increased use of the motor car we had only kept the older ones) numbered about twenty-five. Working out the amount required for the wages at each “pay-day” was not mere routine because it depended so much on who was being paid at that particular time. Actually they were all on a monthly basis but, whereas the men mostly worked according to the Gregorian calendar, the women preferred to use the Chinese

lunar year of reckoning because this gave them an extra month's wages twice in every five years. I had the authority to engage staff and to adjust wages where necessary, and to make loans, as Mother had done, if any of the staff were in need. I also issued the petty cash to the housekeeper, and the cook, who kept their own accounts for which I was responsible. The cook always had a heavy turnover because we provided meals for all but the coolies. Chan-Ah-Bun looked after the general maintenance and was, as always, a great help.

Father made an early opportunity to see if we had any problems. He reminded me of my responsibilities, and gave us to understand that he would always be available should help be needed. He then asked if there were any immediate questions we wished to raise. Grace and I had of course discussed this possibility and we were ready for him. "Yes, please," we said, "we would like to ask two favours." Our first request was for him to give us a set allowance. Mother had previously catered for all our needs but we felt that, with our new obligations at the University, especially in clothing and general expenses, we should try to budget for ourselves on an allowance. Our second request was for the use of the Studebaker car which had originally been purchased for Eva and Irene. They had seldom, however, had the opportunity to drive it as it was normally garaged at *Idlewild* while we continued to live on the Peak. "What would you do with a car?" Father asked. We explained that the motor road had now been completed as far as the Peak tram terminus and, although we could not drive right up to our houses, we could arrange to have the car garaged at the station. This, we said, would be a great help to us for going to the University in the mornings, as lectures began at 8.30 a.m.

He said he needed to think the matter over but his reply was not long in coming. He told us that he did not subscribe to the idea of allowances because he could not judge what would constitute a fair or an adequate amount but, he said, there was no reason why we should not spend in accordance with his means and our requirements, bearing in mind our upbringing and giving due regard to our consciences. "For small purchases," he added, "you will be able to draw on the

household petty cash which you already control and, in the case of more expensive items, you could arrange for charge accounts which, provided you would endorse the invoices as correct, could be passed on to the office for payment." We felt that this arrangement, although not quite what we had wanted, was fair enough and, in any case, there was no sense in arguing with him. In retrospect, though, I think that he made one of his rare economic blunders here, for we were really too young and inexperienced to make wise decisions, and our consciences did not voice sufficient protest. We certainly did not throw his money away but we could have been a good deal less extravagant, especially in the matter of clothes. Our tailors had by this time retired and, instead of getting our dresses made up by local tailors, who were very good and quite inexpensive, we bought ready-made, often imported, frocks from *salons* like Madame Chiffon's, who was well known for the costliness of her garments. To do Father justice, he never complained — at least not directly to us.

As regards the car, he recognized our need for one, but as he wished to use the Studebaker himself, he gave permission for us to buy a smaller one of our own choice. We thought this most generous of him and we would have been happy to have had an Austin seven but "M.K.'s" brother, Horace, whose advice we now sought, explained that a "baby" Austin would be quite unsuitable for travelling up and down the Peak. His recommendation was for an Erskine, which was a Studebaker "light" six, having just been placed on the market in competition with the Morris Oxfords and Cowleys which had recently gained increasing popularity in Hong Kong. The Erskine failed to compete successfully with the English cars, chiefly because of its cost and, in some respects, the car itself was a failure and production was suspended after two or three years. It was just as well that we did not have to pay our own bills for petrol and garage expenses because she simply "ate up" the fuel and the tires. Admittedly travelling up and down the Peak via Stubbs Road (the shorter Magazine Gap Road was not to be built for some years) several times a day as we did, accentuated this shortcoming but, from our point of view, the Erskine was speedy, responsive and very easy to drive. I loved her.

At the University Grace and I had both enrolled as arts students. We had selected the group known as "Letters and Philosophy", our subjects being English, History, Logic and one other. For the fourth subject Grace chose Geography whilst I decided to do Chinese Literature. Having spent so much effort at the Chinese school, I felt that I would like to go on with this, even though it meant twelve lecture hours per week for Chinese as against two hours for Geography. The twelve hours included three on Saturday mornings and the whole of every Wednesday afternoon. It is a great pity that this was the case because, inevitably, other interests and the lure of the sports pavilion on a Wednesday afternoon overcame my zeal for study and I transferred to do Geography instead. The English and Geography classes required no great effort because we were rather ahead of the other students in standard, but Logic was a new subject and, in order to fit in with the lecturer who was a schoolmaster, the lectures were held at four o'clock on Monday and Thursday afternoons. This was a most awkward time, as we would go out to the pavilion soon after lunch, fully intending to return to the class when the time came, but more often than not we stayed on, with the result that a warning was issued that, unless we attended more regularly, we could not be "signed up" for our examination.

Ancient history was prescribed for our first year. Mr. Hughes, the lecturer in this subject, was a graduate of Cambridge and a most interesting teacher. He would sometimes have the classroom cleared so that we could act incidents in the history, like Hannibal's epic journey over the Alps or the barbarian invasion of the Roman Empire. He appeared somehow to be a little of a misogynist and was always more critical of the women students — there were only about four of us in any case — and at the mid-sessional examinations he expressed his disappointment at having been obliged to give to women the first four places on his class list. We found later that he did not actually dislike women and we became great friends. At that time, however, he probably had not grown accustomed to having women in his classes.

We spent a lot of our time at the sports pavilion. "The Pav" as we sometimes called it, was only a small building and

was run by a steward who was known to everyone as "Number One". Number One knew me so well that fourteen years later, when I had occasion to speak to him on the telephone, he at once knew my voice and addressed me as Miss Ho Tung. Dressing room facilities catered for men only but the tennis courts were well looked after, and Number One could always provide a meal at a moment's notice. We had a regular four for tennis: Grace and I, a cousin and another medical student. Somehow, though, we always seemed to end the game with a member of the teaching staff taking the place of one of the men. I remember saying to Grace one day: "I wonder why that Billy Gittins always chips in on our game?" "I don't," says Grace, "can't you see that he is interested in you?" I didn't believe her at the time but determined that I was not going to get involved with a member of the teaching staff, no matter how good a tennis player he might be. We found that not only was he a good tennis player but he also played cricket and football for the University and was a fine all-round athlete having, when a student, won the individual championship two years in succession. He was very keen on promoting sporting activities among the students and was a committee member of the Athletic Association. On the staff, he was a demonstrator in Mechanical Engineering, although he had graduated an electrical engineer and, because of a shortage in the Physics department, he lectured in this subject to first year students. Somehow my prejudice must have been overcome, or perhaps Billy Gittins was just quietly persistent, for it so happened that no matter whether we played tennis at the pavilion, or ping-pong in the recreation room of the Union building, he would always be there.

When summer came we had regular launch picnics run by the students' union and Billy would be present at these also. One day, we were discussing the picnic arranged for that afternoon and I happened to remark that I was not swimming because I did not have my swim suit with me and it was too far to go home for it. "I'll soon fix that," Billy said, "I will pick up one of my sister's costumes." He did too and I enjoyed the swim.

June arrived and a moonlight picnic was planned for the 14th. Grace declared that she had no intention of going and,



no matter how I tried to persuade her, she would not change her mind. I was most disappointed because, not having been to a moonlight picnic before, I was particularly anxious to go, but I was hesitant because of the long drive home alone. When we were late we often did not bother to garage the car but left it at Jardine's Corner, which was about half way between the tram station and our houses. I could have arranged for a rickshaw to meet me there, but the lateness of the hour and the indefinite time of our return made things a little awkward.

"I will take you home," Billy offered.

"That would be very good of you. But how would you get back into town? The trams stop running at midnight."

"I will get my motor cycle up in the afternoon and leave it at Jardine's Corner and then I won't need a tram at all."

When I stopped the car that night, Billy asked me to marry him. "Not just yet," I replied, "I must first complete my course at the University."

"I realize that. And I am prepared to wait until you are ready but meanwhile I want you to know that my intentions are honourable."

I must say I was a little surprised at this display of old fashioned courtesy, but more was to come: I gasped when he went on to say "I must see your Father as soon as possible, to ask his permission to court you."

"Please don't," I begged, "He would never understand." Billy, however, felt that it was the right thing to do; and see Father he did, at the first opportunity.

Meanwhile Grace was waiting up for me and the first thing she asked was "Did he propose to you?" As well as being my sister, Grace was my closest friend and there were no secrets between us.

"How did you know?" I admitted.

"I can tell by the look in your eyes. I knew he would and that was why I would not go to the picnic tonight." Dear, unselfish Grace. She had really wanted to go as much as I did but, as a bystander, she had seen things more clearly.

One morning, Chan-Ah-Bun came to us in great excitement:

"They are pulling down No. 82! And they say the new house is to be built immediately."

"I'll believe it when I see it," I replied sceptically, "We'll go and have a look at the weekend."

"You can see it from here," he called from the window. Sure enough, there was some activity over at *The Falls*.

*The Falls*, or No. 82 The Peak, was an old wooden house a little higher up the hill and to the east of Father's house *The Neuk*, which was numbered 83. It had been unoccupied ever since Father bought it some years before. Its greatest attraction for us youngsters was the swimming pool, fed by a fresh water stream which had its source in the hills above and, during the wet season, would cascade down the steep gully below — giving the house its name.

Ever since I could remember, Mother had pressed Father to build her a house large enough to hold us all under the one roof, instead of dispersed between *The Neuk*, *The Chalet* and *Dunford*. We were always looking at drawings and, I believe that once, about ten years before, the plans for a new house to be built at the *Homestead* site, a property near Jardine's Corner, had even been approved by the Public Works Department when Government suddenly changed its mind. To be quite fair to Father, I don't think he had had any choice in the matter. In exchange of the *Homestead* property and a very large site Government had given him an entire city block, the site of the old Central Fire Station on which he was to erect the *Ho Tung Building*. Government had then built on the *Homestead* site a block of flats and several houses for senior civil servants. So Father, for his new family house, had to begin all over again and had therefore bought the old wooden house called *The Falls*. The site and property were smaller but the swimming pool made up for this and even though the house was not occupied, we used often to swim there, before the beaches became so popular.

Having picked up this bit of news, we all went over as soon as we got home from University classes to inspect the addition to our property. We found that Chan-Ah-Bun's story was true. I can only assume that Father had wished to have all this as a happy surprise for Mother when she came home from England. He had not said a word about it even to us. We had a good look at the plans anyway. We must have seen

them at some stage before this but it was enjoyable to be able to study them, framed and hung as they were, on the walls of the contractor's shed.

It was to be a large house — it would have to be to fulfil Mother's requirements. The plans showed three huge reception rooms on the ground floor, leading in from the main entrance on the south side. All three rooms looked out on to the same wonderful view, slightly angled because of a difference in position, of the bays and islands and boundless sea beyond, that we had at *The Chalet* and *Dunford*. There was a library and reading room at the back. We knew that Mother had wanted a large sitting room after the style of an English drawing room, a second room to be furnished with more formal Chinese furniture, and a dining room to hold twenty tables (Chinese style) for dinner, giving a capacity for two hundred guests. The three main rooms had sliding doors which could be drawn aside to form one large entertainment area. There was to be a sun terrace on the west side and a covered porch forming a rear entrance on the north. Over this porch was a sick room, where minor operations could be performed; it had its own bathroom and kitchenette and could be used as an extra guest room. This was half way up the main staircase and formed a mezzanine floor, with a "chapel" above this, over which was a tower roof. The chapel when finished turned out to be a Buddhist temple of impressive dignity. It served also as a shrine for ancestral worship.

The kitchen and pantry occupied the southwest corner of the ground floor, above which were two hot rooms for storage. Although the women servants were accommodated on the basement level, their rooms were only partially below ground, and their windows had a view across *The Neuk* and down towards Aberdeen. Upstairs there were seven large bedrooms, with five bathrooms. The house had a flat roof, with a sun room approached through the chapel. This completed the general design. Men servants' quarters were to be built over the garage which was separate.

It turned out to be a lovely home, beautifully finished with marble fireplaces imported from Italy, teak panelled walls and parquet floors. Plasterers were imported from Shanghai to

work on the high ceilings and Mother herself selected the light fittings from the General Electric Company of London. The swimming pool was tiled and with this went two changing rooms, connected by an open moon gate, through which the pool could be seen from the approach road. Of course all this took time and it was nowhere near completion when Mother returned from England in the middle of 1928. In fact, years later, there were still workmen of some kind or other always on the premises. The sad part of all this was that, by the time the house was completed, the family had scattered and Mother was left to live in it alone.

Meanwhile Billy had asked for an appointment to see Father and had come away very happy. He said that Father had been most charming. He could make no promises, of course, because Mother was away but there was no reason why Billy should not take me out as often as my work would allow, so long as we left word with the servants where we were going and at what time we would be home. He had stressed that this was purely in the event of an emergency arising. Knowing my Father as I did, I was not taken in quite so easily by this apparent tractability and wondered what was in store for me. I did not have long to wait.

Vic and "M.K." used to come up to see us regularly. At their very next visit, "M.K." asked me about Billy.

"Do you know, Jean, I think you are going to have a lot of opposition from your parents, especially your Mother."

"Oh dear! This will be because the Gittins family are Christians, I suppose."

"Oh no. Something much, much more serious than that. Don't you remember all the trouble they had when your Grandmother died?"

"What trouble?" I was nonplussed. It was no wonder I couldn't remember: I was only four years old at the time.

Vic then told me: "The Gittinses and Mother's brother," she said, "were close neighbours when Grandmother died, but there had been a bitter quarrel over the two houses when Uncle moved to live there. Both houses had belonged to the same owner who, to favour Uncle, had required the Gittins family to vacate the larger one, in which they had lived for

many years, for the smaller one next door. Uncle had only been in the larger house for a short while when Grandmother, who lived with him and his family, had suddenly died and, subsequently, Uncle had had all the bad luck in the world. I know that it is superstitious and quite unreasonable but Mother has blamed all the ill fortune of her family to the dispute, and she has nursed a terrible bitterness which, if anything, has increased over the years."

"But this was nearly fifteen years ago. Surely she couldn't still hold it against them? Besides, she has been perfectly charming when we have brought young Irene Gittins home from school."

I hadn't known Billy in those days but Irene was several years younger than I and she had been one of my favourite guides at school.

"You should know your Mother by now." "M.K." added: "If you are seriously attached to Billy — mind you, I think he is an exceptionally nice person — I shall have to sound her out. Will you leave things with me? I will do my best to help you."

Father then sent for me. He said:

"This Mr. William Gittins tells me that he wishes to marry you. Naturally I cannot make such a decision without first consulting your Mother."

I assured him that there was no question of a decision. "All he wanted was to let you know his intentions and to request permission to take me out."

"He is quite welcome to do that so long as you let the servants know at all times where you may be found. "But," he added, "I can't understand your falling in love with him. He is too dark to be considered handsome and he is eleven years your senior in age."

"I think he is quite nice looking. As for age, you are thirteen years older than Mother and you have had a happy marriage."

"Another thing. You are so extravagant. How is he, on a University demonstrator's salary going to earn enough to support you?"

I suppose I then said an ungrateful and unpardonable thing, but I was stung:

"As your daughter, I have lived in accordance with your instruction but, as a poor man's wife, I am sure I shall spend only within his means." He later told Mother that he had tried to reason with me but I had had an answer for everything. Unlike Mother, he nursed no family grudge. I understand that, had Billy had a Chinese name, Father would have had no objection.

Oh dear! They say that troubles never come singly and I proved no exception to this rule. Before long, I ran into stormy waters with the traffic police over my driving. We had used the car increasingly over the past months and, during the summer vacation, had driven most mornings over to Repulse Bay for an early morning dip. We would return to the University Library for several hours of work and then have another swim in the afternoon. I learnt to know every inch of the road between the Peak, the University and Repulse Bay and reckoned could judge with fine accuracy the exact spots where I could safely overtake another car. If they refused to allow me to pass, I would follow them so closely that, in exasperation, they would move to one side. This annoyed some of the other Peak residents and they complained to the Police. What upset them most, they said, was the fact that my passengers (usually Grace and Florence) would turn around and laugh at them. This was not true. They might have turned around but they did not laugh, I am certain of that. The police served me a summons but it was either a trumped-up charge, or else someone had been mistaken. Anyway I was attending a lecture at the time stated. Horace Lo, younger brother of "M.K.", appeared at Court on my behalf and the case was dismissed.

This infuriated the police. There was at that time a friendly sergeant in the traffic branch who knew Eddie quite well and he used to press Eddie to urge me to take care. Also, whenever he saw me at official functions (he was their controller for special traffic problems) he would make it a point of whispering to me "Look out, Miss Ho Tung. They are out for your blood and, sooner or later, they will get you if you are not more careful." I very much appreciated his concern and promised to do my best to steer clear of trouble. I knew

that I sailed pretty close to the wind at times but I never broke traffic regulations and this annoyed traffic police the more.

One day I had a ring on the telephone from the Inspector-in-Charge of the Peak district. To my surprise he said apologetically: "I am most awfully sorry, Miss Ho Tung, but I am afraid that, through me, you have run into a spot of trouble." "I am very sorry too," I replied, "but do tell me how." "Well, you nearly knocked me over last evening." "Really? I *am* sorry. But are you sure? I didn't notice you." "No. I don't suppose you would have," he agreed. "I was in plain clothes and you were driving pretty fast." "I remember being in rather a hurry at about 6.30 p.m." "That is right," he said. "I am newly arrived from England and I didn't know you; but I did see that it was a yellow car with the registration number 2331. Well, I went down to the Traffic Department this morning intending to ask for a warning to be sent to you but they behaved very peculiarly: 'No warning required in this case,' they said, 'We've got her at last!'" What could I do but apologize for almost knocking him over and to thank him for his courtesy in letting me know? I added that it had to come and I probably deserved it anyway.

In due course I received a summons but the magistrate fined me only HK\$10 which, even at that time, could not be regarded as heavy. This did not satisfy the Captain Superintendent of Police and he sent for me to his own office. He told me that he considered the fine as being far from adequate, gave me a long lecture—he had known me from childhood—and added the injunction that, if I did not mend my ways he would ask Father to confiscate my car or, alternatively, he would suspend my license to drive. I think that he felt, as I did, that although the traffic branch had won the round, it was not really to their credit.

In spite of these worries of heart and car it was good to be alive. Grace and I had greatly enjoyed our first year as undergraduates and had sat our examinations in December with satisfactory results. We now looked forward eagerly to the months ahead for this was the season for dances and evening socials. Actually the season had begun in October, with the

Union Dance on the night of the "Double Ten" — the tenth day of the tenth month — this being the Chinese National Day, but things had quietened down for the examinations. With these now out of the way, there would always be some function or another on every Saturday night as all the five student hostels and each one of the many clubs and societies would, in turn, be hosts to their friends. The season culminated in the dance of the Athletic Association on the evening of the Annual Sports Day in April. Never before nor since have I enjoyed such absolutely happy and carefree days.

According to Chinese reckoning, a person is a year old on the day he is born and, on the first day of the new lunar year, even if he had been born on the day before, he would be to all intents and purposes aged two. On the twentieth anniversary of my birth, therefore, I was reckoned to be twenty-one. We used to observe our lunar birthdays in those days and so, on the 18th day of the third moon, which happened to coincide with the 18th day of April in 1908, but which fell a few days later in 1928, Father was host at a dance held at *Idlewild* to celebrate my "coming of age". It was quite a large party, to which Billy and his sisters and many of our University friends were invited. It was also attended by most of our aunts and cousins, even though many of them did not dance. The mirrored sliding doors dividing the drawing and dining rooms were opened, and the carpets removed, to accommodate the dancers, for whom a small jazz band had been hired, and chairs were arranged around the two rooms for those who did not dance. The excellent supper, prepared by the *Idlewild* staff, was served in the Chinese sitting room which was generally known as the "marble parlour" because of its marble floor. Its furniture was of blackwood inlaid with slabs of Chinese marble.

In May, Mother returned from England for Robbie's wedding. Robbie had passed out of Woolwich and was to be married on 6th June. We knew the bride-to-be and her family well; Hesta had been in my class at school. She was charming and beautiful and both Mother and Father were very happy at the prospect of yet another alliance with old family friends. The wedding was comparable to Vic's of ten years earlier, and the reception, attended by H.E. the Officer administering the



Government, Sir Thomas Southorn, and Lady Southorn, and over a thousand guests, was held at *Idlewild* where a huge bamboo pavilion had been erected over the upper tennis courts. There must have been five hundred at the dinner in the evening. After a short honeymoon, the young couple left for Paris where Robbie was to have further training at a French military college.

When the excitement was over Mother and I had a talk about Billy. As was to be expected, we could not arrive at a satisfactory solution to the problem. I really felt a great sympathy for her but failed to see any reason for her continued bitterness; she, on the other hand, could not be reconciled to the thought of my future being tied to the people who, to her way of thinking, had been responsible for all the sorrow and unhappiness which her family had suffered. Moreover, she was deeply hurt that I would not show more consideration for her feelings and shocked to find that, in the eighteen months of her absence in England, the meek and obedient child she left behind had grown into a mature and strong-willed young woman.

In the weeks that followed she could hardly bear to speak to me although she made no attempt to restrict my movements. Early in August I went into hospital to have my appendix removed and, all at once, Mother was her gentle and solicitous self who, in all our childhood illnesses had eased our discomforts and anticipated our every need. I remember particularly the anxious care she displayed when I was down with the Spanish 'flu in 1919 and the terrible thirst I suffered. It seemed that she never slept at all for each time I awoke she would be sitting beside me, offering a sip of iced water. She was a born nurse and throughout the years, even when she was nursing Father, whenever any of us took ill, she would have us moved into her room and, if we should have to go to hospital, she would go in with us. She even badgered the doctors to let her attend our operations. This desire was not due to idle curiosity on her part but stemmed from a knowledge that her presence would help us. At least one doctor has told me of how on one occasion, when they had had an emergency in the theatre, what a great help she had been to

them. She now had her bags packed and moved into the Peak Hospital to be near me. Billy called twice to see me with his friend J. L. Youngsaye and, even though "J.L." tried his best to engage Mother in conversation, she kept so strict a guard over me that Billy and I had not a moment to ourselves.

Irene, who had also returned from England, was about to sail for the United States and Mother thought it would help my convalescence if I had a sea trip, so it was decided that Grace and I should go with Irene as far as Japan and return on the first available ship.

We left Hong Kong in late August on R.M.S. *Empress of Russia*. I think that it must have been a special excursion trip because we called at Nagasaki and rounded the southern tip of the island of Kyushu to approach Kobe through the Japanese Inland Sea. This was indeed a rare pleasure for the Inland Sea, not on the normal run of larger ships, is noted for the irregularity of its coastline and the profusion of small islands, making it one of the leading scenic spots of Japan. The 250 miles of calm water were not traversed in a matter of a few short hours; we entered the passage in the afternoon, in good time to watch a colourful sunset, followed by a long twilight; and this spectacle of calm serenity was later to be enriched by the mellow beauty of a waning moon. Early the next morning, the islands were still with us but the passages soon widened to enter the approach to Kobe, at which port we disembarked. We spent a most interesting day at nearby Kyoto, where we visited the famous tea pavilion and the historic imperial gardens and shrines before boarding the Tokyo train in the evening. Irene was to go on to visit the national capital whilst Grace and I were to leave the train mid-way to spend several days at Miyanoshita in the beautiful Fuji-Hakone National Park before going on to Yokohama to join our ship for Hong Kong. At dawn the next morning we all stood at the windows of the Pullmann carriage to catch the first glimpse of the sacred mountain *Fuji san* towering deep blue and snow-tipped in the early morning light. It was an awe-inspiring sight. At a time like this, one can but be humbled by the realization of man's limitations for, although Japan can boast of the distinctive quality of its art and poetry which the physical grandeur

of the country has inspired, no pen could, I felt, possibly capture and reproduce the glory and splendour of that momentary glimpse of Mount Fuji.

The September term at the University was a busy one for examinations were due at the end of the year. Actually I had worked consistently throughout the year because I was anxious to win the only scholarship available to second year arts students. The competition was fairly strong, especially from a student, P. M. Hui, who was doing Pure Arts. He was a *President Scholar*, which meant that he had topped the year for Chinese students at matriculation level and was the current holder of the President scholarship. Hui and I were the most friendly of rivals and each would, in a manner typical of Chinese students, tell the other that he (or she) would be the certain winner of the scholarship for which we were both striving.

On top of this Professor Simpson had returned from his furlough and took over the lectures in English. He also proposed that, instead of holding a dinner at the next Arts Association annual function, we should stage a play. He thereupon set to work to produce "The Poetasters of Ispahan", a poetic drama set in 17th century Persia and which, in observance of the Chinese idea of not mixing the sexes in a group of players, was cast entirely from women undergraduates. I played the role of the poet. The evening was an entirely new venture and proved a great success. It became the first in a series of dramatic functions at which the members of the Arts Association annually entertained their friends.

The year had seen some insuperable difficulties but it held many compensations as well, not the least of which was finishing ahead of Hui in the scholarship contest. It was rumoured that, had the average of his four best subjects been taken (I had four subjects to his five), he would have won but, on an average of all subjects, which the terms of the scholarship specifically stated, I had the better result. I was well set then to go on to third year in which I was to major in history and in preparation for which I immediately placed on order a set of *The Times* publication, "The Historian's History of the World". But this was not to be; before the year had ended, the

entire structure of my academic future had collapsed. This is how it happened.

Because of Father's inability to attend late functions we always had our Christmas gathering at midday. This was usually held at *Idlewild* and the whole family would be present at a sit-down dinner of turkey and plum pudding in traditional style. Now the Gittinses also had such a gathering, but theirs was held at night and, as this would not conflict with our arrangements Grace and I were invited to join them. There did not appear to be any objection to our going, especially when it was known that Billy would see us home. But this little gesture must have set a spark to my Mother's pent-up emotion for, without any forewarning I was confronted, on the very next day, with the choice of either making a promise to have nothing further to do with Billy or, if I refused to give such an undertaking, I would have to forego my studies and be married without further ado.

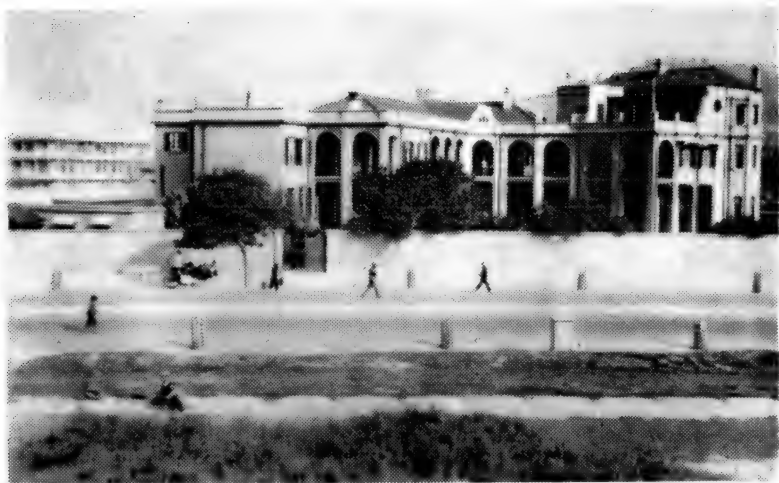
This sudden climax was a terrific shock. Naturally the last thing I wanted at this juncture was to give up my course of study but, at the same time, I could not bring myself to make a promise I had no intention of keeping. It was indeed a dilemma. I felt that my parents had meant what they had said and I had therefore no alternative but to reply quietly that I would ask Billy when he would be ready to marry me.

I have never regretted my decision and, if I had to make it again, I would still act likewise but, on looking back after forty years, I feel that I might have made an error in my judgment of my parent's intent. In fairness to them, I feel now that they had not really wished me to forego my studies. Most probably, they had not meant me to take their "ultimatum" so seriously and had merely hoped that I would be forced into making the promise, possibly without actually keeping it. They were not to know that it was not in my nature to do this, nor would my girl guide principles have allowed me to entertain such, to my mind, dishonourable ideas. That my decision shocked them was quite obvious. They had most certainly expected that some compromise, in traditional Chinese style, would by degrees evolve. But I was too young,

too positively logical, to understand compromise. While they, having forced my hand, could not, or would not, retract from my acceptance of one of their alternatives. It is only natural that I have at times felt sorry that I did not get my degree, and often have I wished that I had continued at the University after my marriage but, in those days, it was not customary for married women to be undergraduates and the idea just did not occur to me at the time. I think that my teachers at the University, with a more mature estimate of my prompt decision, were perhaps more upset than I, and the Vice-Chancellor possibly voiced the feelings of the professors when he sent for me to say how very sorry they all were that the Senate had to decide that, since I was not to continue with my course, the money award of the second year scholarship would have to go to the next candidate proceeding to the third year course. "But", he said, "I am presenting you at the congregation as the Scholarship Student of the year." So, while I was given the honour, Hui received the actual award and, as Hui generously remarked, "You and I are both happy, Miss Ho Tung."

Mother consulted her Red Book, a reference calendar of dates from which all Chinese seek guidance before anything is done, and the 19th day of March, 1929, was said to be a "red letter" day. Wedding arrangements did not run smoothly all the time but "M.K." had a lot of influence with her and, with a little tactful persuasion, she played her part very well. She personally selected my pearls which jewelers far beyond Hong Kong have much admired, and other pieces of jewellery which, according to her, it was essential that I should have because, no matter what the future brought, jewellery would always retain its value. The truth of her words were to be proved when war took toll of all the rest of our worldly goods. She helped me furnish my new home and took an interest in my trousseau. She stood firm, however, against a church wedding so, out of regard for her feelings, we were married at the Registry Office. But Mother was not the only bigot; Billy's own minister refused to read over the marriage service with us because I was not a baptized Christian!

Billy's niece, Marjorie Fisher, was to be my bridesmaid and Vic's children, Wilbur and Phoebe, page boy and flower girl. Our old friend Madame Chiffon made all our dresses. "Your wedding gown will be the talk of Hong Kong, I promise you," she said. It was of ivory chiffon velvet, short in front — skirt lengths in those days were not mini but the more modern of us wore them just above the knees — with a long train lined with the palest of pale blush georgette. It looked really lovely. Mother was most anxious to hold the reception at *The Falls* which the architects, as is their wont, assured us would be ready. Fortunately we decided against this and mine was the last wedding to be held at *Idlewild*. As we walked slowly up the driveway through the honour guard of scouts and guides, we felt proudly touched by this unexpected expression of loyalty on their part. Entering the house, we went through the two main rooms on to a marquee built over the large formal garden to meet some five hundred waiting guests. It was small compared to the other weddings but we were most happy to see the University so well represented by the Vice-Chancellor as well as the Arts and Engineering staffs and many fellow students. In the principal toast of the day, Gwilym Hughes's subtle reference to the possibility of Billy's sports trophies causing a slump on the silver market, and his wistful sigh over the loss of the academic apple of his purely academic eye brought the right degree of humour into the proceedings. It was, as Mother remarked, a very nice wedding.



*The Diocesan Girls' School in the early 1920s*

*Photograph from a collection held by Mrs. John Mackie*



*A play by the women undergraduates of the Arts Faculty,  
University of Hong Kong, produced by  
Professor R. K. M. Simpson*



*The Guard of Honour at our wedding on 19th March, 1929*  
*Billy's scouts formed the second half of the Guard*



## *Book Two:* UNCLE BILLY

1.	A Glimpse of China .. .. .	75
2.	A "Missie" in Kowloon Tong .. .. .	83
3.	My Side of the Family .. .. .	98
4.	We Prepare for War .. .. .	110
5.	And War Came .. .. .	122
6.	The Years in Stanley .. .. .	137



## A GLIMPSE OF CHINA

In telling my story so far, I have been amazed at the vividness with which details have been remembered. The thrill of every childhood pleasure, the anxiety brought on by each doubt and fear, have been lived again with a keenness that the passage of time has not dulled. It is difficult to believe that almost another forty years must elapse before coming to the present day.

Events of the first twenty years culminated in my marriage with Billy Gittins. One might well ask what are a bride's thoughts on her wedding day? Is she suddenly assailed by the apparition of nameless shadows which make her hesitant to step into an unknown future, or would she be impatient to begin a new life, having implicit faith in the present and, carrying with that faith, a confidence born of love and of hope? And if she could but peep into the future, so that a panoramic sweep of events to come could be flashed before her eyes, would she quickly turn her steps in another direction or, having advance knowledge of what the future will bring, would she go forth boldly along the path she had chosen, in a determined effort to challenge and subdue that future, come what may? These are not questions that can be answered lightly, nor should one presume to make generalizations. I can only say that, for my part, I remember accepting the challenge with some natural apprehension brought about by the awareness of my inexperience, but never lacking an assurance which surprised myself. And so it came about that early in the year 1929, just before I had reached my twenty-first birthday, I was unexpectedly transported from the carefree atmosphere of student fellowship into a realm where "Missie", as the mistress of the house was called, reigned supreme. How I groped at coping with problems of household management without practical train-

ing, and the way in which Billy and I learnt to face up to new responsibilities of parenthood, constitute the basis of this part of my story. But, before embarking on so serious an undertaking, we delighted in the joys of a never-to-be-forgotten holiday.

Our wedding night was spent in our new home. This was only a modest suburban house in Kowloon Tong which Billy had taken for a year but, to us, it held all that one might have expected of a palace. We were surrounded by our own furniture and fittings, over which we had spent a good deal of thought and planning, and most of which had been supplied by Lane and Crawford, the leading store who had the reputation of giving their customers nothing but the best. The sitting and dining rooms, kitchen and servants' quarters occupied the downstairs level of the house, whilst the upper floor consisted of one large and two tiny bedrooms, with a bathroom, and a balcony which extended in front of and across the length of the main bedroom. Kowloon Tong was a newly-developed area so the garden was very bare, but Billy's friend, J. L. Youngsaye, who was known to us all as "J.L.," had prepared several flower beds for us in which he had placed seedlings of giant sunflowers and zinnias, which later gave a profusion of colour. He had also arranged for fifteen palms to be planted along the side of the house to provide shade for the long summer months and this gave the garden some relief and quite a distinctive character. We had engaged a houseboy, an amah and a coolie, which was customary and certainly adequate for us, and the servants were left in charge when we sailed for Shanghai on the following day.

Shanghai at that time was the largest, busiest, and most prosperous city in the Far East. All Shanghailanders knew this and worked hard to live up to it. They also tried to live up to their belief that their city was the most cosmopolitan in the world, with commercial, political and social opportunity for all nationalities; and for all nationalities a common civic duty to encourage sport, music and the arts. The glitter and glamour of its night life had earned for it the title "Paris of the East". Others have referred to it as the East's Chicago

because it had the reputation of being a den for gamblers, gangsters and kidnappers. Its citizens were industrious and enterprising and wealthy business tycoons went around in chauffeur-driven cars behind glass that was made bullet-proof. Visitors loved it for its colour and its sheer wickedness. In spite of many political upheavals and even without the advantage of Hong Kong's outstanding harbour facilities, Shanghai remained the centre of China's industrial life and was her greatest port. There was a large district known as the International Settlement with concession areas for representatives of many nationalities. Her population at that time amounted to nearly four million, which was more than four times that of Hong Kong in the comparable period. But it was not for any of these attractions that we went to Shanghai; for us, it was merely a gateway through which we could take a brief glimpse of the China we had never really seen.

Father had a large and rather lovely house in Seymour Road in the British Concession. The house was set in grounds and gardens of about three quarters of an acre and had several reception rooms downstairs, one of which was furnished in the rather ornate pink, white and gold style of the Louis XIV period. There were enough bedrooms upstairs to take us all on our occasional visits but no one was living there at the time and Billy and I now used it as our headquarters. We made an early opportunity to pay a courtesy call on Father's friend, Mr. C. P. Pan, who was compradore (one who acts as liaison between the Management and the firm's Chinese customers) at Jardine's. The Jardine "hong" or business house, was situated in the *Bund*, the beautiful promenade running along the Whangpoo River, a delta tributary of the Yangtse River, where the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, whose building was one of the first to be fully air-conditioned in the Far East, was also located. Mr. Pan invited us to his magnificent residence, where we met other members of his large family. Dinner was served on the "deck" of a most unusual summer house of two storeys in the garden. This had been built in the shape of a houseboat, complete with a surrounding moat which was crossed by a stone bridge. When he heard that we intended to visit

Hangchow, and to cruise on the Yangtse, he at once offered to make all our travel arrangements, thereby ensuring that we had the best in accommodation and service everywhere we went.

We travelled by train, a mere 120 miles, to Hangchow, the capital of Chekiang province, where we spent five days. This is perhaps the most notable of the historic cities of old China and, situated as it is at the mouth of the Yangtse delta, at the head of Hangchow Bay, it was the main commercial centre for the district. Hangchow is also the southern terminus of the Grand Canal which, from the time of the Monguls to the mid-nineteenth century, was the main avenue of communication linking Peking with the deltaic ports. Literary and cultural development reached their highest peak late in the Sung dynasty (early thirteenth century) when, retreating before the invading Tartars, the Chinese government settled in the Yangtse basin and made Hangchow the imperial city. Hangchow nestles at the foot of a beautiful range of hills and spreads itself by the shores of the lovely Si-hu or West Lake. In the still of dawn and at sunset the lake would reflect the blush of peach blossom made more enchanting by the tender green of newly awakened willow trees, whose graceful branches overhung its edge. Could earth offer any lovelier place for a honeymoon? Ours was worthy of its setting. From our balcony we would watch the pale moon rise each evening, to ascend slowly over the stretch of mirror-calm water, its serenity disturbed only by the ripple following the wake of an occasional small boat. The city itself is covered by a network of canals with the most artistic of bridges and studded with fine old buildings and famous monasteries, each of which had a tale to tell. It is said that Marco Polo, seeing it in his travels, described Hangchow as the finest city in the world.

A little to the west of Hangchow is the Lung-Chin, or Dragon Spring, around which is grown the green tea of this name, famed amongst tea-drinkers the world over for its quality and fragrance. Whether the anti-luxury policy of the present government of the People's Republic of China has stopped the production of fine silk, I am unable to say but, at that time, Hangchow was still renowned for its silk manufacture, the secret

of which had been handed down from generation to generation over the centuries. The beauty of its products and the historic interest of its buildings, coupled with the charm of natural features has earned for Hangchow the praise of an old proverb: "There is Heaven above and Hangchow below". We would have liked to have lingered longer in the midst of all this wealth of culture and to learn from the old monks some of the wisdom of their philosophy, but the cruise to Hankow was a pleasure not to be so lightly discarded so, leaving the gentle serenity of the West Lake region, we looked forward to the broader vista of the mighty Yang-Tse-Kiang (River Yangtze).

Returning to Shanghai we boarded one of Jardine's passenger-cargo river steamers, the S.S. *Sui Wo* for a ten-day cruise. It was to take us to Hankow and back. Although six hundred miles from the coast, Hankow was considered to be the head of ocean navigation on the Yangtse river, because ships of five to six thousand tons could sail up to this point. An exceptionally dry winter, however, had brought the water level so low that there was some question as to whether we would be able to reach Hankow on this trip but this possibility did not cause us any undue concern as our main objective was the rest and relaxation offered in a cruise of this nature.

The Yang-Tse-Kiang is the greatest of China's waterways, with an estimated length of some three thousand miles. It rises in the heart of the Tibetan mountains, not far from the source of the Yellow River or Hwang Ho, and descends from the mountains in a succession of rapids, cutting its way through the province of Szechuan to form the famous Yangtse gorges. Navigation through the gorges is exciting and highly dangerous but in the lower reaches of the river, through which we were to travel, the fall is only about one inch in the mile. The water level between the dry period of winter and the summer months, influenced by seasonal monsoons and the melting snow of the mountains, varies to a depth of seventy to ninety feet at Chungking but, at Hankow, where we were heading, it is only some forty to fifty feet. The *Sui Wo* was not the most modern of Jardine's fleet of river steamers but she was a comfortable ship and, due to the thoughtfulness of Mr. Pan, the

attention usually kept for special "guests" was extended to us. We were placed beside the Skipper at meals. The courteous Captain Horner Smith went out of his way to make us feel comfortable and pointed out many of the interesting landmarks. I was to meet him again, on the river in 1933, and in internment during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong.

The river widened as soon as we left the immediate vicinity of Shanghai and for many miles we could not see the shoreline of the side opposite to the one by which we steamed. The muddy coloured water was so low that the sun-baked bank seemed to tower above the ship, giving us a strangely fascinating, almost ant's-eye, view of the occasional farmer tilling his field or guiding his yoke of oxen by the river's edge.

We passed Soochow, which is reputed to have the most beautiful women in China and whose canals, with their arched bridges, bring to the mind of the traveller memories of Venice. We stopped briefly at Chinkiang, where the compradore came aboard to meet us. Here, on a small promontory protruding into the river, is the famed Monastery of the Golden Mount. Legend has it that in the time of the Great Flood, the saintliness of the old monk had saved this monastery from destruction; because of him, even though the flood waters sweeping over China had covered most of the entire valleys of the Yangtse and the Hwang Ho, they had stopped short at the gates of the Monastery of the Golden Mount. Here, too, the Grand Canal crosses the Yangtse on its way to Hangchow. The former importance of Chinkiang as a commercial centre was superseded when the intersection point was shifted upstream by the construction of the Peking-Shanghai Railway which crossed the river at Nanking. Both Soochow and Chinkiang are on the northern bank of the river but Nanking, our next port of call, lies on its southern shore. Nanking is situated at a point nearly equidistant between Peking and Canton and has been known throughout the centuries under various names. "Southern Capital" as it is now called, dates only from the beginning of the Ming dynasty (fourteenth century), when the first Ming sovereign rebuilt it on the site of the old city and made it the seat of his imperial court. This move was short-lived for later



emperors preferred the northern capital, Peking, and soon returned there. It was not until 1928 that the city resumed its place as a capital under the Nationalists, which it continued to be legally, even though the government moved as a wartime measure to Chungking after the Japanese invasion. Nanking fell into Japanese hands in December, 1937, but at the end of the second world war, after an absence of over eight years, the seat of government was officially re-established in 1946.

Leaving Nanking we steamed across the river to Kiukiang, a port famed for the fineness of its porcelain, the clarity of which is said to be possible only because of the special quality of the clay peculiar to this district. Here we awaited the rise of the river, to make possible the remainder of our journey upstream to Hankow, expected at any moment. After two days of waiting and just as we were about to return disappointed to Shanghai, a sudden upsurge of water immediately sped us on towards Hankow.

Hankow lies in a most commanding position in the heart of the Yangtse basin. It is the southern terminus of the Tientsin-Pukow Railway which feeds Peking and Manchuria, and the northern end of the Canton-Hankow line. When the two railroads were linked to form the Peking-Hankow Railway its strategic position was enhanced and Hankow became a city of great commercial potential with a background of wide historic interest. Having been delayed at Kiukiang, our stay in Hankow was confined to the time taken for the exchange of passenger and cargo and we left the steamer only to call on Mr. Pan's counterpart at Jardine's office. The old gentleman, who knew my parents, was most upset at not being given the opportunity to entertain us and such was his hospitality that he sent on board, just before the ship sailed, a cooked dinner of special Hankow dishes.

Our return journey was speeded by the flow of the now rapidly rising river and, within two to three days, we were back at Shanghai. We were much disappointed at not having seen more of Hankow but came away with a promise, as yet unfulfilled, of a return visit to travel further upstream to pay homage to the wonderful gorges. I was told that in the early

days of commercial aviation, flying boats, rather than skim over the tops of the mountains to Ichang and Chungking, would follow instead the course of the river and fly deep between the gorges. The war and the progress of civilization will have altered the entire method of travel in these regions but the gorges will always remain unchanged. I am still hopeful of keeping that promise some day.

## A "MISSIE" IN KOWLOON TONG

If we had not moved into *The Falls* before I was married, I might not perhaps have felt the difference between living on the Peak and in Kowloon Tong. In many respects the Kowloon Tong house had more to recommend it than had *The Chalet* and *Dunford*, for instance, sewerage, running hot water and the cleanliness of a newly completed building; but having had all these amenities at *The Falls*, I noticed more of Kowloon Tong's deficiencies. This is only natural and does not mean to say that I was sorry I was no longer living on the Peak.

Kowloon Tong was, at that time a newly developed residential district. It was planned to be a garden city for young people. The word "Kowloon", as all the locals know, is the Chinese words for Nine Dragons, which the mainland hills opposite to Hong Kong island resemble, and from which range, Lion Rock stands prominent. "Tong" means a pond. In developing the area, the low-lying hills had been levelled and the pond, lying at the foot of the hills, had been filled with earth excavated in the process. The suburb sloped gradually up towards the foot of Lion Rock itself and, from certain parts, like the back of Kent Road, one could see the entrance to the railway tunnel which runs through beneath Lion Rock. The houses in this new district were all similarly styled and were mainly of two storeys, varying slightly in design to accommodate three or four bedrooms. There were a few bungalow-typed houses scattered about. Each house stood in its own "garden" which was fenced around in traditional suburban pattern. The houses were well spaced, minimum requirement for each site being a sixty foot frontage; the depth varied from eighty to one hundred and fifty feet. "Garden City" was well named for even in these days of over-crowded conditions in Hong Kong, the gardens here are full of trees and shrubs; at

that time, however, some of the gardens were quite bare, there being hardly a tree or even a blade of grass to be seen. The soil was mainly baked clay and in some cases, I was later to find, building rubble filled the gardens to within a foot of the clay. I missed the loveliness of the Peak gardens and, above all, our glorious views. All the roads in the area were named after English counties. Our first house was in Essex Crescent, where we lived for two and a half years.

One of the reasons for our early return to Hong Kong was the impending wedding of Billy's younger sister Mabel. This had been planned for the 17th April, just a month after ours had taken place. Mabel was to marry one of Billy's closest friends, George Hall. Billy and George had known one another since they were youngsters, before George had gone overseas to study architecture and, on his return after graduating from the University of Liverpool, the old friendship had been resumed. The union of old families is always a pleasing event and Mabel's marriage was no exception. Everyone was delighted. George was now practising as an architect with his brother.

I had naturally met Billy's people long before we were married. His father, Mr. H. Gittins, had been associated with Jardine, Matheson and Company for many years and was, in fact, not far off retirement. He was a quiet and gentle man, an Elder of St. Andrew's Church in Kowloon, and a Christian in every sense of the word. His integrity was highly respected; he was greatly admired by all who knew him. Mrs. Gittins was a most lovable person. She was impulsive, emotional, kind-hearted and sincere. She either liked you or she didn't and one was never in any doubt about her feelings. Fortunately, in spite of all the family disagreements, she liked me and, in time, there grew between us a deep affection and understanding rare indeed between a woman and the wife of her favourite son. In all her associations with my mother she acted with friendliness, discretion and dignity and, long before Mother's death in 1938, they had become great friends. In deference to their wishes, I always addressed my parents-in-law as Father and Mother but, to differentiate between them and my own parents, I will in this story refer to them as Mr. and Mrs. Gittins.

Mr. and Mrs. Gittins had five daughters. The eldest, Charlotte, was married to Frank Fisher, who was with the British and American Tobacco Company. They spent most of their time in one or other of the China coast ports and, except for special occasions, came to Hong Kong only on their way to and from "home" leave in England. This was always rather upsetting for Charlotte, who was very much attached to the family and each parting would be a wrench for her. Charlotte had been to school with my sister Vic, and she and Billy had grown up together and had remained firm friends. The next girl, Daisy, came after Billy in the family. I was told that she was her mother's favourite but this was possibly because, as a child, she had been rather delicate and had needed greater attention. However, she now enjoyed normal health and was also married and lived not far from us in Kowloon Tong. Charlotte and Daisy each had two children, a girl and a boy.

The other three sisters, Mabel, who was now being married, and Irene and Phyllis, had been my contemporaries at school — Mabel slightly ahead of me and the other two several years behind. Bill's brother, Victor, was placed between Mabel and Irene, and had been at the University with Grace and me. Victor was devoted to Billy, who had taken a great interest in his education and upbringing, and of whom Billy was very fond. There was a twelve year gap between their ages and, in some respects, they were more like father and son. Victor had just graduated Bachelor of Arts in Commerce. He was later to read law at Oxford and, in 1967, became one of Hong Kong's five Queen's Counsels.

The family had lived in Kowloon for many years and Mabel was married at St. Andrew's Church. She looked beautiful in one of Madame Chiffon's creations, a gown of embroidered net, with which she wore my plain tulle veil. Being the new, and at that time only, daughter-in-law, I assisted Mrs. Gittins in looking after their guests. I met many of my new relations by marriage, the Gittins family being almost as large as my own.

After their honeymoon, the newly married couple settled in a house only a few streets up from where we lived. The proximity of our marriages, and of our homes, brought Mabel

closer to me than any of the others. She was very sweet and friendly — as she still is — and helped me tremendously through those early, rather strange years. Our children grew up together, her two sons coming between Elizabeth and John and her daughter, Shelia, born six months after John's arrival. Later, when Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese, we kept together through internment at Stanley, sharing one another's physical privations and mental anxieties until the end of the war.

But this does not mean to say that I did not get on well with the others. On the contrary, I liked them all and they liked me. I think that at times they thought me a little supersensitive. This was mainly because I took all that was said so seriously, our family having been taught from childhood to be considerate of other people's feelings in our speech and to remember always Confucius's tenet to think thrice before we spoke. The Gittinses, on the other hand, were used to being perfectly natural and casual with one another, saying the first thing that occurred to them. This attitude, to my surprise, even extended to the way they addressed their parents. Although this did not seem to worry the old couple, there was no doubt that Mrs. Gittins liked the courtesy and respect which it was natural for me to offer her, simply because she was an older person and my husband's mother.

It was in my own home that I encountered trouble with personal relationships, and this began almost immediately, with the servants. Charlotte and Daisy had called round to our house one day while we were away and had found the cookboy asleep in our sitting room. They had dismissed him on the spot and had engaged another on my behalf. This did not worry me in the least; in fact, I was very grateful to them but, not having had to deal with servants other than those we had had at The Peak or at *Idlewild*, who had been my friends and advisers, I felt strange and embarrassed with the type of domestic help with whom I now had to cope. The trusted servants I had known were a part of the family; people whom I had called, albeit out of courtesy, brother or sister while I, in turn, was known to them as "No. 6 Miss". Now, I had to say "Boy", or "Coolie", or "Amah", as the case may be,

nameless individuals to whom I was known as "Missie". The greatest problem of all was to have to tell them what to do. It hadn't taken them long to see that I was an utter tyro and to press their advantage. They wouldn't have been human if they didn't.

I soon realized that the household expenditure was far too high but there was no comparable budget with which I could set my standard. Boy would do all the marketing, for which I would settle with him each day. The groceries were an alarming concern. These were obtained from the local compradore, a store which delivered daily from orders given the night before. Besides the usual provisions like butter, eggs, and the like, items such as Old Dutch cleanser, Brasso, and Johnson's floor polish came up very frequently. I wondered if all this was necessary and said so. I was told that, in a new house, more cleaning materials than normal were required. I could not really believe this but hesitated to go further for fear that the cleanliness of the house would suffer. But the demand continued at the same rate as the months went by. Long afterwards, neighbours told me that, through their servants, they had heard that my trio had run a grocery store of their own at my back door!

Another thing that worried me was the way in which the marketing costs ran away with the cash. Here, again, I did not feel sure enough of myself to argue. One day I remarked on my problems to Billy's aunt, who had come over on a casual visit. She was Mrs. Gittins's sister, a very kind person who was affectionately known as "Fifth Aunt". A short while before this, I had taken ill with acute pains in the early hours of the morning and, as our telephone had not yet been installed, Billy had gone around to her house, at the other end of Essex Crescent, to consult her. She came over immediately, bringing with her some Chinese herb which, on drinking, my pains had eased.

"Why don't you do your own marketing?" Fifth Aunt now asked.

"I wouldn't know where to go and what to buy."

"It is quite easy, really. Come with me tomorrow and I will show you."

She took me to the market the next day and I bought, amongst other things, a large cut of sirloin of beef. It had been my intention to trim a part of it out for my dog but it was not until the middle of the afternoon that I remembered this. I therefore asked Boy to do it for me.

"But I have already put it in the oven" he said.

"Please take it out and cut it now."

"There won't be enough for the dog, Missie."

"Not enough? It was a large piece of meat."

I followed him into the kitchen. The meat was barely warm but it was now only a half of its original size. I could not believe my eyes! Boy insisted that it had shrunk in the cooking but I could see where it had been cut into and decided that a goodly portion was even now waiting to be cooked for their own dinner. On the following day he resigned and the others left with him. It was most inconvenient, and I hated the thought of having to admit of my own incompetence when the others had to be told, but I could not feel really sorry not to have to take matters further into my own hands.

A short while before this Billy had brought home a puppy. It had been given to him by a friend who claimed it to be a thoroughbred Alsatian. I was pleased beyond measure because, with Billy away all day, I was beginning to feel very much alone. The pup certainly had the black and tan markings of an Alastian; it also had a very intelligent face and the most appealing eyes. I called her "Becky". I didn't know a great deal about Alsatian dogs but there was something about Becky's tail and ears that was not quite right. However, she was only a few weeks old and I told myself I had to give her time. Meanwhile she became my constant companion. We took her for walks every evening and Billy trained her to "heel" and not to stir out of the garden even if the gate were left open. He would let her carry in his newspaper when she went to greet him. She slept on the mat between our beds and every morning she would pick up our slippers and nudge us to get up. She could recognize the sound of our car's engine, even above the noise of the train and, long before the car could be sighted, she would be waiting, barking with excitement, at the gate. However, try as I would to help her



appearance, her tail stayed stubbornly up and her ears continued to flop down. Later we found that she was only half Alsatian; the other fifty per cent of her was Russian hound.

A few months later Mother picked up an unwanted pup and asked if I could give him a home. "Smut" as we called him, because of a smudge of black on his face while the rest of him was white, was very thin and neurotic and, although he soon became used to Becky and to us, he would dash behind the sofa or under the China cabinet as soon as any stranger came to see us and, no matter how we tried, we could never coax him to come out. Although he was so terrified of human beings, Smut had no fear of other dogs and he would protect Becky from animals several times his own size. They were great companions and we found we could leave them for long periods guarding the car, a two-seater Willys Knight tourer, and they would never run away. It was a sad day when Becky died the following summer. I had gone up with my baby to stay at Mother's as soon as the hot weather came on in June. In those days, there were no vehicular ferries to transport cars from mainland to island and, because of the prevalence of rabies in dogs, one had to obtain a special permit from the Colonial Veterinary Surgeon to take dogs across the harbour. We therefore decided to leave Becky at home, especially as she would be some company for Billy in the evenings. But she had pined for me and became ill. We arranged for her transfer immediately but she had died. I was inconsolable. We had other dogs, of course, and good ones too, but there was never another Becky.

A further reason for our rush back to Hong Kong from our holiday in China was Billy's business commitments. He had left the University in 1928 and had joined his friend James Mackenzie Jack, who was now the head of his late father's electrical engineering firm of William C. Jack and Company. I was very sorry that Billy had decided to leave the University but he had naturally felt that his prospects for advancement would improve in the business world.

Soon after our return to Hong Kong, Jimmy Jack had sailed on leave for England and Billy was left in charge of the firm. They were, at that time, engaged in the installation

of electric wiring for the Peninsula Hotel, one of Hong Kong's pioneering jobs in concealed wiring. It was a big undertaking and Billy practically lived on the building site.

Although his time was so fully occupied at the Peninsula Hotel, Billy could not afford to neglect their other work and, to keep in touch with his men, he attended the workshop at seven each morning where, before dispersing, all the workers would congregate to draw supplies. Although he would come home for breakfast and sometimes for tiffin as well, it made a long day for me. Moreover he would often have to return to the Peninsula Hotel after our evening meal. They were working against time and there was just no alternative. I don't think I had ever before experienced such intense loneliness as I felt at times during that first summer and, although the others — Grace or the Gittins girls — would ask me to go to the beach with them, foolishly I would always refuse, just in case Billy might come home early and I wanted to be there to greet him.

I struggled to make something of the garden. The sunflowers and zinnias had given a fine show but there now arose the question of replacing them with something else. I wanted a small lawn in front and some vegetables at the back. I was very fortunate in having a friend in J. L. Youngsaye. "J.L." was a schoolmaster and, although he had his own house and garden, and did a good deal of coaching besides, he used to come frequently after school was over to help and advise me. "J.L." had an encyclopaedia of gardening which he lent to me and the three volumes lived on my bookshelves for years. He now arranged for the appropriate lawn grower to come around with the squares of turf and "J.L." himself supervised the laying of the sod. This is the standard way of making a lawn in Hong Kong because it is virtually impossible to grow lawn from seed. Judicious watering in its initial stages is an important after-care, and if this is done properly, the lawn practically grows by itself. "J.L." also grew the most beautiful orchids. He was a real fancier and cultivated many varieties. As each variety bloomed, he would send the pot around to me and, in due course, would send another to replace the spent

one. In this way I became the proud owner of a flowering orchid almost the year round.

Yes, "J.L." was a good friend and we saw a lot of him at this time. On Sunday mornings he and Billy would have their scout meetings at our house and "J.L." would stay to lunch with us. Some other friend would join us in the afternoon for a game of bridge or Mah-jong (a domino game), or "J.L." and Billy would sit quietly and discuss their stamps. They were both keen collectors. Billy's albums were lost, with the rest of our belongings, during the war but "J.L." 's fine collection continues to flourish. Only a few years ago his generous help was again solicited when Professor E. S. J. King of Melbourne wished to fill some gaps in his, at that time, modest set of Hong Kong stamps which, he said, he was building up because of his association with me. "J.L." helped him with the gaps and much more besides, and this began between them a correspondence of such persistent regularity that their enthusiasm must have exceeded that of any two pen friends.

By the time we left Essex Crescent we had established a nice lawn in front and a garden at the back where vegetables, from string beans to spring onions, grew. In our next house in Kent Road, even though I was a good deal more experienced, the struggle was greater still. It was one of those reclaimed sites and, six months after we had sowed our first seeds, the carrots were still pencil thin, and the seedlings of annuals we put in just wilted and died. Fortunately Billy was at that time working out in the New Territories. William C. Jack had won the contract for the supply and installation of cables for the electrification of a large section of the district and Billy had to go out daily for many months. I placed two sacks in his car each morning and he would bring them home each evening, filled with rich soil. Slowly and methodically we trenched the entire garden, removing the building rubble, which filled six truck loads, and replacing it with healthy loam from the New Territories enriched with a goodly proportion of Canton mud. The result was very gratifying. By the next season, passing neighbours were stopping to admire my rows of sweet peas which had stems of ten inches long and over,

and carried four or five blooms on each stem. The carrots, lettuces and cauliflower were of excellent quality; we supplied the rest of the family with tomatoes and beans; and my reputation as a gardener was established.

We had a good sized yard at the back of the house in Kent Road and Billy was anxious to experiment with rearing fowls under scientific conditions. We had a few leghorn hens but the Rhode Island reds were the best. Each hen was given a name and wore a leg band. Billy put up trap nests and we kept records of their laying habits. If we had a broody hen we would set a nest of day-old chicks under her and she would rear them, thinking they were her own. The day-old chicks were bought from dealers in Kowloon and had been hatched by the simplest of methods. The dealers would import cheap eggs from Swatow and Amoy from up the coast, and incubate them on large trays, layer upon layer on shelves in a warmed room. Each tray would be covered by a light quilt. Should any of the eggs become cracked in the process, the cracks would be sealed by a bit of paper. In this way thousands of eggs would be hatched so economically that the chicks need be sold for only a few cents to give them a profit. One can't help wondering how a paying proposition could possibly result from this, but both eggs and labour were very cheap, and there was hardly any overhead expense. In this, I think, lay the answer. Sometimes we would hatch our own eggs. When this happened I would keep the broody hen on a plant pot and take her upstairs under my bed, and she would be fed and exercised each morning on the upstairs verandah. I am sure Billy's mother, who stayed with me for a few days during one of these episodes, must have thought that I was more than a little eccentric, but she had to agree that we had the finest, cleanest and most friendly of hens she had ever seen.

When we moved to Suffolk Road in the autumn of 1934, I was very sorry to leave our well nourished garden, but the owner wanted the house for his own use. The new house gave us an extra room and faced south which was much cooler. The site was not very large and the house had been built far back, leaving no back garden. Fortunately there was a lawn in front and we grew a few vegetables on the side. These

were separated from the rest of the garden by two lovely oleander trees. I made a mixed herbaceous border along one side of the drive and grew shrubs on the other, right from the front gate up to the house, and "J.L." helped me with a rock garden against the fence on the other side. During one summer, while the children and I were up at *The Falls*, Billy built a small pond for them, with pebbles we had collected from Tytam beach where Grace, who was now married to Horace, lived at that time. Of the fifteen palms which "J.L." had planted for me in the garden in Essex Crescent, thirteen had been stolen in one night during the first summer. I had salvaged the two that were left, planted them in pots, and then divided and subdivided them over the years. By the time we went into Suffolk Road, I was able to plant in the ground a crescent of well-established palms, screening the gardener's potting corner and compost heap.

Our first child, Elizabeth, was born on Wednesday, the 12th March, 1930 in the French Hospital. Mother, who had refused to visit me at home, now came to be with me. Once again she was doctor's assistant, nurse and parent all rolled into one. I had been quite unwell in the preceding months and Dr. Macgowan was not entirely happy about my condition but it turned out to be merely a case of utter exhaustion and a few days of rest soon put this right. The baby cried all her first night but after this she was strangely quiet, sleeping through every disturbance, and had to be wakened as each feeding time fell due. Elizabeth was an unbelievably good baby, both grandmothers claiming that never before had they seen the like. She was placid, happy and easily managed at all times, and was a great joy and pride to us throughout infancy and childhood.

During my stay in hospital, Mrs. Gittins visited me almost daily. I was worried and watchful, in case there might be some sign of friction between her and my Mother, but I need not have feared. They behaved towards one another with a courtesy born only of good breeding and a stranger, not knowing of the past bitterness, could easily have mistaken them for life-long friends. I am deeply grateful to Billy's mother for the part she played in bringing about this reconciliation — it could not

have been easy for her. I was proud, too, of my own mother at the way she managed to overcome her deep prejudice, and her willingness to respond.

They joined forces in being highly critical of the woman I had engaged as Baby Amah and Mrs. Gittins was deputized to find a more suitable appointee. In this I was extremely fortunate, for she managed to hear of a most experienced person, one who had recently retired from service with a family for over twenty years. Now the children had grown up. Mrs. Gittins engaged her immediately. Her name was Kwan Sze (Sze meaning No. 4). Normally I would have called her No. 4 Sister but, because she had the habit of grumbling about everything, Billy christened her "Grouser". She was rather flattered at being given an English name — until she found out what it meant; even so, she took no exception and Grouser she remained.

Grouser was a wonderful asset. Not only was she experienced and entirely trustworthy, but she was loyal and absolutely dedicated. Here at last was someone I could regard as friend and confidante. I leaned on her heavily and was glad to hand over the reins of child — and, indeed, of household — management. She had travelled extensively in China with her previous employer and had lived in England for some years. She rather prided herself on her ability to converse in English and wanted to use this in speaking to the children but, to her immense disappointment, I would not allow the children to speak broken or pidgin English. Nothing could stop her, though, when she was out with them; for some reason known only to herself, Grouser always regarded it to be beneath her to converse with them in Chinese in public. She became one of the family and was particularly devoted to John. I don't think she ever forgave me for sending the children away to Australia in 1941, when war appeared to us to be inevitable and imminent. This all but broke her old heart. She was with us when war broke out and stayed on in the flat until Japanese troops took it over, whereupon she joined Grace's servants, who looked after her until she died during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong.

In the late spring of 1933 my health broke down. It was

diagnosed as early tuberculosis and I was sent to Kuling, the famous health resort in central China, where the therapeutic quality of the mountain air is said to be comparable to that of Switzerland. Taking Elizabeth and Grouser with me, it was planned that we should stay there until the end of the following summer, a period of some fifteen months. Kuling is a mountain resort on top of Lu-shan, in the Kiu-kung-shan ranges, situated some fifteen miles to the south of Kiukiang on the Yangtse. The only access was by light chair lift, carried by coolies, each of which requiring at least three. Two would carry the chair, with frequent changes of one or other for the third man, whose duty it was also to help lift the chair over the more difficult parts. It was an arduous trip, lasting from four to six hours depending on weather conditions. It was my great good fortune on arrival at Shanghai to find the steamer *Sui Wo* about to depart for Kiukiang. Captain Smith was wonderfully kind during the voyage, especially when he heard that I was not well. When we arrived at Kiukiang, it was nine o'clock at night and the town was in flood. Instead of leaving us, he held over *Sui Wo's* departure until the morning, so that we could proceed straight on to Kuling without having to stop in a strange and flood-bound town overnight.

Our stay in Kuling was not a happy one. Had I entered the sanatorium, things might have been different, but I was not ill enough to do this. We took instead a small bungalow in the grounds of a well-known hotel where we were reasonably comfortable and the meals were good, but conditions were rather primitive. We made friends with a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Chan in the next bungalow, who had a little girl of Elizabeth's age. Mrs. Chan was French and an extremely nice person. They were in Kuling for the benefit of his health. It was mid-summer and even at an altitude of four thousand feet, the air was hot and humid. Each morning, the jarring sound of cicadas which inhabited every tree by the thousand would chorus loud and shrill as soon as day broke. I found difficulty in breathing in the rarefied atmosphere but the prospect of having to stay there through the long and bitter winter, to be followed by yet another summer was the most disturbing thing of all. It never occurred to me that my plans could be changed.

The situation worsened when Grouser became ill with acute bronchitis and, as I listened to her coughing throughout the long night, I convinced myself that she was going to die. One day I became so ill with anxiety and nervousness that I was forced to lie down and sent Elizabeth for Mrs. Chan. When she came over the mosquito curtain rings on my bed were rattling because of the violent thumping of my heart.

"Have you thought about going home?" Mrs. Chan asked.

"I am not allowed to do so because the doctors say that the climate in Hong Kong during the summer months is harmful to my health and I must therefore stay away until the end of the hot weather next year."

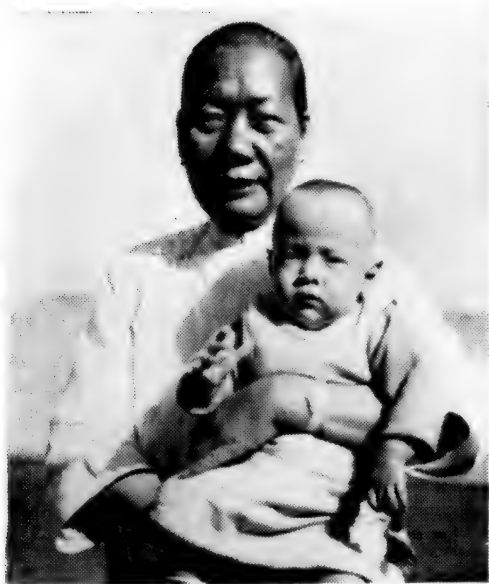
Mrs. Chan was not convinced that this was a good enough reason for my continued stay in Kuling. She was not much older, yet she seemed so much wiser than I. She continued:

"It seems to me that *this* climate is not doing you any good. I would give some thought to going home if I were you."

I did give the matter some thought and realized how very foolish I had been not to have considered going home before. The very idea made me feel better immediately and, later in the afternoon, I was able to go up to the hotel to telephone Hankow to find out the movements of likely shipping for Shanghai and Hong Kong. To my great relief and pleasure, *Sui Wo*, bound for Shanghai, was due in Kiukiang within three days and a cabin was available! On hearing this, even Grouser felt better. I prayed that the fine weather would hold out so that we could reach Kiukiang in time. Leaving Kuling early one morning, a fine mist lightly mantled the harsh outline of the mountain and the normally bracing morning air suddenly turned mild. This made me almost regret our hurried departure but, as we turned to wave the Chans "Goodbye", I realized the extent of the debt I owed to Mrs. Chan for her sound and timely advice.

On our return to Hong Kong, Mother suggested that we should spend some time at *The Falls*, where she would be able to keep an eye on me. I was given a course of what, at that time, was regarded as the latest treatment for certain tuberculous conditions — artificial pneumothorax — in which the





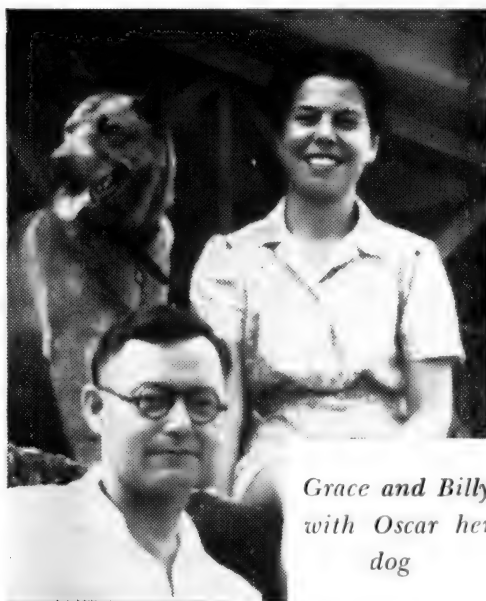
*John with "Grouser"*  
1936



*Elizabeth and John*  
1939



*Billy and me at 11-mile Beach*



*Grace and Billy  
with Oscar her  
dog*

affected lung is collapsed by air pressure, introduced into the pleural cavity by means of a hyperdermic syringe as large as a fine knitting needle, and kept collapsed by periodic refills of air. It was not a pleasant treatment but it appeared to agree with me. I gained thirty pounds in weight within six months. By the end of 1934 I was declared cured.

Our second child, John, was born on 28th November, 1935. He arrived two months prematurely and weighed only three pounds. It had already been determined, because of my health, that I was not to nurse the infant but, because he was born premature, it was obvious that he would require special consideration. I was told that there could be no alternative to having a wet nurse. I find it difficult to express, even now, the anger and dismay I felt at being forced into this humiliating situation. My protests were made in vain: this was a time, I was gravely informed, that I had to do as I was told. Dr. Macgowan himself selected the "ideal" wet nurse. Having done so and having reassured himself of John's good progress, he went off to join a weekend camp with the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps.

But no sooner had he gone than John became gravely ill. The nurse's milk had proved too rich and he suffered acute indigestion and diarrhoea. This would not have caused such anxiety in a full-term baby but, in a premature infant, only a few days old, it was extremely serious. I asked for Dr. Macgowan's immediate recall which he had assured me he would answer if I needed him but, although his partners were sympathetic, and all came to see me, no one would agree that bringing him back would serve any useful purpose. "Sister Camille is doing all that is humanly possible," they said. They regarded the situation as entirely hopeless but John refused to die and, with Sister Camille's help, he clung to the thin thread of life. I can still see Dr. Macgowan as he returned from the camp that Sunday evening. He had come straight to the hospital and was still in his uniform. His partners told me later that it was his phenomenal luck as a doctor that saved John—it was a near miracle. Whatever it was, I felt only gratitude for the efforts he made to assist the valiant spirit struggling to live. To me he was God.

## MY SIDE OF THE FAMILY

Mother nursed her old grievance for a year. She had warned that she would not visit me and, after her refusal of my first invitation, I did not ask her again. Strangely enough, Father decided to call on us. He came on Christmas Day but as we had not been advised of his intention, we were unfortunately not at home to receive him. Mother came later. Her peace offering was a beautiful Chow pup which we named "Bunny".

By this time she had become reconciled to my marriage. She could see that I was entirely happy and she had learned to like Billy and his mother, but it was Elizabeth who had really won her over during the summer we spent at *The Falls* when she was three months old. Elizabeth had such winning ways and, when she grew a little older, her decided preference for her Grandma made her quite irresistible. Our visits in the summer months became an annual event. They were of great benefit to me and to the children; Mother enjoyed having us and looked forward to our coming with eagerness. She was now very much alone for Grace had graduated and had gone to England, travelling to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway in the company of some friends. Irene, having obtained her M.A. (Columbia) and Ph.D. (London), was now teaching at Lingnan University in Canton, and Florence had transferred from the Diocesan Girls' School to attend classes there. Mother could hardly wait for the beginning of each summer to have us up with her. Billy would join us on alternate nights and at weekends. He treated Mother in the same casual manner which he used towards his own parents, and Mother grew to appreciate him more and more as time went on.

Having suffered the discomforts of Kowloon's summer heat, I relished with greater appreciation the more temperate

weather on the Peak. Much of my time was spent in helping Mother with planning the garden. She was still developing the site, trying to place as much of the virgin scrubland as possible under cultivation. She was very anxious to grow fruit trees which we ordered from Canton: peaches, pears, apricots and tangerines. Terrace after terrace was reclaimed to take vegetable beds all the way down the slope towards the swimming pool. When these were built, she started on the side overlooking the sea until it seemed as though we were trying to reach down to Aberdeen. We studied the seed catalogues from Suttons in England, from whom we ordered most of her seeds. She gave me a free hand in planning the most favourable situations for the great variety of seeds ordered. The gardeners, pleased that I should take so much interest, became most co-operative, and I picked up a lot of useful information which was to stand me in good stead later on. We always had in mind the annual horticultural show in March of each year to which exhibits were sent for competition with gratifying results. The vegetables grew remarkably well in the terrace beds. Flower seeds were sown in boxes and transplanted into trays and finally placed in plant pots. Three pots of each variety were required for entries for the show but a further reason for using pots was that these could be changed frequently, so as to have the best possible display on hand at all times. Sweet peas, however, were always cultivated in specially prepared beds, the Australian variety from Yates of Sydney seemed particularly suited to Hong Kong's climate. These months were happy and productive. Even now, a feeling of nostalgia sweeps over me when I think of the garden at *The Falls*.

The children loved going to the beach and, often, we would drive down to Repulse Bay of a morning. During the weekends, Mother would take us out on the motor yacht *Fook Po* and Vic's family would join us. When we were young, we had had a three-masted sailing yacht, *Plover*, but Mother had found the caprice of a sailing vessel and the unreliability of her auxiliary engine not suited to a family of young children and she had had *Fook Po* built to her own specifications. *Fook Po* was named after a Chinese general and means "conqueror of the waves". When launched she was the pride of A. King's

shipyard. A sturdy seventy-foot vessel, roomy and fitted to give maximum comfort, she had a large and well-appointed cabin, a galley, a storeroom and a bathroom big enough to take a full-sized bath. The open deck at the stern was spacious, and the poop deck over the cabin and utility area had room for at least a dozen mattresses. She carried a dinghy on davits and sometimes towed a second dinghy behind her; she had a crew of five. With a speed of eight to ten knots, she was exceptionally seaworthy and we could venture to the more out of the way beaches where we might be the only visitors and the water so incredibly clear that the bottom of the sea could be seen long before we cast anchor. At other times we would take her to nearby Junk Bay or Silver Mine Bay for a weekend of fishing and a completely relaxed holiday. She had one fault, though, she rolled at the slightest swell of the sea. Father found the swell disturbing and preferred the steadiness of his own boat, *Clara*, which he had bought from a wealthy American who had had her shipped out from the United States. *Clara* was broad of beam, slower and elaborately furnished. The cabin had walls of panelled wood and boasted a small piano. Her deck was enclosed, the entire stern area being fitted to form a huge divan bed; but the poop deck was neither as large nor as well finished as that on *Fook Po* and was meant mainly for sun bathing. She carried a small motor boat *Hasty* as well as a dinghy and had her own crew. Father normally had her tied to a buoy just off Queen's Pier so that he could go on board for his tiffin and a rest each day; but he would make her available to us if *Fook Po* should be in dry dock or when he happened to be away.

*Clara* was, unfortunately, very prone to engine trouble. One day Mother had taken some elderly ladies out and there was the usual difficulty in getting her started when it was time to go home. Suddenly we heard a loud explosion. A look into the engine room showed it to be in flames. Billy had gone in to help them before this. "Get the old ladies and children off the boat!" he called to me—he knew that there were a couple of fishing boats alongside of us and it would only take a minute to transfer them. He then picked up a flaming tray and dropped it overboard. The fire, which had been started

by the engine back-firing and setting alight the tray of waste petrol under it, was quickly extinguished, but it had been a close shave. After this Father asked Billy to take over control of the two boats for him. This was not an easy assignment and the crews were at first resentful of what they regarded as interference. In time, though, they learnt to respect Billy's knowledge and to take a pride in keeping the boats trouble-free.

Grace came back from England towards the end of 1932 and in January of the following year, to the immense satisfaction of both families, she and Horace Lo were married. They had a large reception at *The Gripps* in the Hong Kong Hotel. Horace was so proud of his bride and so very happy that we all shared in his happiness. I had never seen Florence, who was principal bridesmaid look so beautiful, and Elizabeth and Vic's Rita added a delightful piquancy to the picture in their long gowns of blue tulle. They were only three years old but they carried out their duties with poise and charm. How they managed not to trip over their dresses, or Grace's train, when going up the Hong Kong Hotel stairs will always remain a mystery to me.

Six weeks later Elizabeth had a further thrill. This time she was bridesmaid, with Vic's Vera, at Florence's marriage to Dr. K. C. Yeo. We had known "K. C." since his University days. After taking his degree in Hong Kong, he had gone to England for post-graduate studies in tropical medicine and public health, from where he had been appointed Medical Officer in Hong Kong Government service. He remained with Government for thirty years until he retired from the Directorship of Medical and Health Services in the late 1950s. Meanwhile he was about to take his first "home" leave and, immediately after the wedding, he and Florence left on an extended world tour.

And so it happened that, although Florence is some years younger than Grace and I, her children grew up with ours. Grace's only child, Shirley, was placed between our two; so were Florence's Dick and Daphne, with her third, Wendy, six months younger than John. The most wonderful aspect, from my point of view, was that both Grace and Florence came to live in Kowloon Tong — not immediately, of course, but in due

course. It was a particularly happy circumstance when Horace bought a house in Norfolk Road (we were in Suffolk Road at the time) right opposite to us. By then a warm friendship, born of mutual respect, had developed between Horace and Billy, and Grace and I were able to resume our close relationship of former years.

In June of 1936 Vic and "M. K." were kind enough to accept responsibility for John while Billy and I took Elizabeth away for a holiday. This was no mean undertaking on their part for, although he had overcome much of the handicap of his premature birth, John still needed a good deal of attention. Vic and "M. K." were wonderful and we spent three months in Tsingtau where Father had made available to us his holiday house. Robbie's son, young Bobby, came along with us. His parents were at that time in Sian in northwest China and Hesta joined us for several weeks before taking Bobby back to Sian with her. Passing through Shanghai, we were delighted to see something of Eddie and his family who now lived there.

The house in Tsingtau was roomy and comfortable and had been planned for casual living. It was only a short distance from one of the best beaches. This was the first holiday we had had since our honeymoon and, for Billy in particular, it was long overdue. In almost perfect weather conditions we spent most mornings on the beach, played tennis in the afternoons, or went riding in the beautiful pine forest, a feature for which Tsingtau was quite famed. We had taken riding lessons before leaving Hong Kong and even Elizabeth could manage her pony with ease. At the end of the three months we decided to spend a few days in Peking.

Who can visit Peking and fail to be impressed by the grandeur of this great capital city with its wide historic appeal? We counted ourselves fortunate in having managed this visit for, before eight months had elapsed, the Sino-Japanese conflict had begun and opportunity has never recurred. It was early October and the many parks and gardens were flooded day after day in glorious sunshine. On the nearby Western Hills, the changing shades of autumn mantled the countryside in a cloth of speckled gold. The symmetry of Peking's planning, its ancient monuments and straight, wide thoroughfares



straddled by ornate p'ai-laus (memorial gateways), its walls within walls dividing the various sections, and the gates through which supercilious looking camels still pass on their way to and from the Gobi desert, all combine to give it an atmosphere of distinction not to be found anywhere else. In the oldest sector, the structure of which is like that of a Chinese box, that is, a series of boxes one within the other, lie the palaces and shrines of the Inner City. Inside this is the Imperial City which, in its turn, surrounds the Forbidden City where the emperor used to live. Evidence of the splendour of the past was everywhere to be seen. The striking palace buildings, roofed with glazed tiles of gleaming gold, form museums of architecture in themselves, while within their walls are ceremonial halls displaying treasures both rare and exquisite. Most impressive of these is the grand and elaborately decorated Hall of Supreme Harmony where, only a quarter of a century before, the Emperor held court.

The famous Temple of Heaven and, not far from it, the Altar of Agriculture, lie in spacious grounds at the end of the straight imperial road to the south of the Forbidden City. One may well stand and wonder at the beauty and majesty of the Temple's fifty-foot dome, finished with glazed tiles of royal blue, and see in imagination the pomp and ceremony with which the emperor tendered his prayers and sacrifices. We spent a day at the Summer Palace, built only at the end of the last century by that most cruel and unscrupulous of women, the empress dowager Tz'u Hsi, from money which was to have been spent on the navy but which she squandered to satisfy her luxury loving desires. Her Summer Palace must rank as one of the finest of imperial estates, richly endowed as it is with lakes and gardens and ornate structures, amongst which is the beautiful Painted Gallery, a graceful promenade of striking artistry, curved to follow for over a thousand feet, the shore line of the main lake. An all-day excursion by train to see the Great Wall of China highlighted a most memorable week. Its nearest point is only thirty-five miles to the north-west of Peking but the train, carrying an observation carriage, climbs ever up and up, and runs mile upon mile, under the shadow of the wall's ramparts and watch towers as it winds its

dragon-like way along the edge of the scarpland. It has been suggested by certain astronomers that, from the moon, this mammoth structure may be seen with the naked eye as a huge yellow serpent; one can but marvel at the stupendous power and endurance which, twenty centuries ago, made possible the construction of this edifice.

We were not long back in Hong Kong and had only just brought John home when fate dealt Vic and "M.K." a crushing blow. Early one November morning we learnt with shock and sorrow of the sudden passing of their elder son, Wilbur. Wilbur was a fine and healthy lad just turned fourteen years. He had a most lovable nature and the kind of intellect which promises a brilliant future. But this was not to be. He had complained on the Thursday before of a sore throat; by Monday morning, he had died of a streptococcal infection. It was before the days of sulphur drugs and antibiotics. His parents were understandably devastated. Mother persuaded them, in due course, to take a short holiday and, on our promise to care for their other children, they spent several weeks in the Philippines. Despite the circumstance that cast a shadow over the entire household, there arose from this association a warm and lasting attachment. Their daughters, Phoebe, Vera and Rita, like Elizabeth, turned readily to Billy who gave them the companionship they needed, whilst the young and responsive Tak Shing became my special charge. We lived as one large family: what was more important, we gained their confidence and friendship.

Mother had during these years increasingly interested herself in the promotion of education for poor Chinese girls which, at that time, was very limited. Concurrently, her devout faith in the Buddhist religion had intensified. As a result of this she started, in 1931, a free school for girls in the poor district of Wanchai in Hong Kong — a similar experiment had been successfully carried out in Macao — whilst at Castle Peak, in the New Territories, a seminary for Buddhist nuns and novices had been established. She undertook a series of pilgrimages into China to worship at the many famous temples and monasteries. She had been to Burma and to India with Grace, and had visited many of the notable holy places within this orbit. She had a growing conviction that it was now necessary

to have in Hong Kong an institution whereby a combination of lay and religious teaching could be applied and, in conjunction with this, there should be a place for worship matching, if not in tradition then at least in form, the many Buddhist temples she had seen. It was a grand ambition and soon became an undertaking which she was determined to carry out. A suitable site was procured. She selected the right architect and, in a very short space of time considering the size of the undertaking, construction work had begun. The steepness of the site overlooking Happy Valley in some respects determined the general plan of the building which was built of several levels. Classrooms of school and seminary occupied the lowest level near the main gate. The entire area of the next level, other than a very small flat for herself, was devoted to the great hall of the temple which had an open ceiling reaching to the roof and a gallery around. A memorial chamber for ancestral worship, together with a library and living quarters for the seminarists were built over the classroom area. The building was a massive structure using only the best materials and of modern design, but externally it had adopted the style of the old northern Chinese form of architecture, the graceful and decorative appearance of the roof with its gold coloured glazed tiles, imported from China, made it an outstanding landmark in the district. The great hall of the temple was finished in every detail in the manner of the famous monasteries she had visited. When the interior decoration was considered, it was determined that only skilled artisans could carry out the distinctive features of the wood sculpture and carve the intricate designs on the fittings which were so important a part of the *décor*. I am unable to say what Father's reaction would have been had he been consulted, but he was overseas, so Mother decided to import a band of craftsmen from Shanghai, turned the vast dining room at *The Falls* into a huge workshop, where the figures of Buddha and all the minor deities, together with the canopies, stands, altar tables and other accessories were carved and sculptured, lacquered and overlaid with gold leaf before being installed at the temple. A huge bronze bell, to summon worshippers to prayer, was specially cast in Canton.

In 1935 work on the building was completed. The seminary became a part of the temple known as *Tung Lin Kok Yuen*, while the lay section, which had had so humble a beginning, retained its name of *Po Kok Free School*. They were separate but related institutions under the one roof and Mother herself supervised the running of the whole complex. It was indeed a dream come true but, although she had devoted such thought to its planning and had watched so carefully every step of its growth, the realization of her ambition had not been achieved single-handed. She was most fortunate in having at all times substantial financial backing from Father and unstinting help from fellow devotees. The loyalty and devotion of her friend and constant companion of these years, Miss L. C. Lam, was of particular comfort to her. At home she continually sought the advice and guidance of "M. K." in all matters of a legal nature whilst, in Billy, she found an interested and understanding ally over any problem she might encounter in her self-appointed duty of "clerk-of-works" when construction work was in progress. They would hold long discussions in the evenings, especially during the summer months when we were staying with her. Mother always retired early and, after our dinner, we would spend the evening in her room when with Billy, more often than not, sprawled on top of the second bed, they would talk far into the night.

Mother did not live long after the building was completed. On 5th January, 1938, after an illness lasting only forty-eight hours, she died of a status asthmaticus (severe and prolonged attacks of asthma). She fought with great courage and indomitable spirit. But the hand of fate could not be stayed. The serious nature of her illness had shocked the whole community for she was a well known figure and greatly beloved. As she quietly gave up the struggle, many friends had gathered together in prayer and we were all at her bedside. She lay in state at *The Falls* while we awaited Eddie's arrival from Shanghai, taking it in turns to keep vigil by the coffin both by day and at night.

A Chinese funeral is a very important occasion, the date and time being determined only after consultation with the Red Book. Full ceremonial rites were to be observed in accordance

with traditional custom, and the funeral procession was on such a scale that, before being finalized, all arrangements were discussed with police authorities. All had to be planned to the last detail as the slightest hitch could cause complete chaos to the city's traffic. When the appointed day came around the sun shone brightly on a cold morning as the long cortège, headed by a ten-foot banner, borne lengthwise on a flower-bedecked cradle, left *The Falls* punctually on its long route. It was to go via Happy Valley, through the city, and then out to the family cemetery at Mount Davis. We had politely but firmly refused the offer of brass bands, so often seen in Chinese funerals, from a number of organizations. The banner, however, is a very special honour reserved only for those who, by reason of their age and virtue merited the privilege. It had to be escorted by two close male relatives. In my grief I could yet realize with surprise and appreciation the depth of Billy's feeling for Mother demonstrated in a fine gesture: he had overcome his innate abhorrence of appearing in any way unusual by electing to don Chinese mourning garments (a long white gown for men, with a white band tied around the head) to lead the procession with "M. K." as banner escort. Behind them were four large lanterns carried by lantern bearers. These signified in Chinese characters that this was a funeral of a member of the Ho family, showing details of Mother's position and age with three years added: one year for heaven, another for earth and a third for man. The Chinese characters were blue. Similar lanterns are carried at weddings but, in these, the characters are painted red. The lanterns were followed by a floral car, on which was set a life-size portrait of Mother escorted, like the banner, by two other close relatives. All this preceded the hearse which was elaborately decorated with flowers. The coffin itself was covered by a blanket of white chrysanthemums. The male mourners followed immediately behind the hearse, those in deepest mourning wore sack cloth and were screened from public gaze by a curtained enclosure carried on four posts. Robbie bore the staff of the principal mourner. We followed in cars, with other relatives and friends behind us and vehicles carrying the thousands of floral tributes bringing up the rear. The pro-

cession stopped outside the *Tung Lin Kok Yuen* for a brief ceremony and was joined by members of school and *Yuen*. It paused again, because of Father's long association, by the head office of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Here the procession lengthened to include representative detachments from the Police Reserve, St. John Ambulance Brigade and other organizations in which either Father or Mother had been interested. Friends paid their last tribute at the "Pavilion of Final Parting" at Pokfulam, where an altar had been set up and her old friend, a high priest of the Buddhist faith, conducted a short service. We then went to Mount Davis. Mother was laid to rest. We were left to mourn. The suddenness of our bereavement added poignancy to our grief, but this was how she had always hoped it would be.

Mother willed her estate for the benefit of the temple/school in perpetuity and named Miss Lam her successor, both as superintendent of the *Yuen* and as head of the school. She requested the establishment of a Board, consisting of lay and religious friends and members of her family (Irene, Robbie, and "M.K.") to guide and direct its external policy, but before long the Japanese occupation had disrupted the life of the colony and the school had to close its doors. In spite of great hardship and privation, Miss Lam, with Vic's assistance and the handful of seminarists, won their way through the years of Japanese occupation and interference.

In the post-war period, the *Yuen* has become, not only a place for meditation and worship, but the recognized centre of Buddhism in Hong Kong. The lay section has seen two decades of tremendous expansion and great progress. The site is not a large one but a new building, with a playground, was erected and declared open by Lady Grantham, wife of His Excellency the Governor, Sir Alexander Grantham, in 1951. A further extension was added in 1954. The once primary school with under one hundred pupils is now a flourishing, Government subsidized, institution offering secondary education with a vocational bias up to Chinese School Leaving Certificate standard. It has an enrolment of over one thousand girls who are eligible to go on to further training as nurses and teachers, for it maintains highly satisfactory results at public examina-

tions. Miss Lam carried out her responsibilities with courage and determination and members of the Board have given generously of their time and service. Vic and the others have more than fulfilled the trust which Mother placed in them; as a result of Vic's efforts on the Finance Committee, the foundations of a sound financial position have been well and truly laid.

## WE PREPARE FOR WAR

The troubled years in Europe during the 1930s had brought concern but little disturbance to the normal life of the colony of Hong Kong. The Spanish Civil War, Hitler's fanaticism and Italy's belligerency in Ethiopia all seemed very remote but, when Japan intensified her acts of aggression in China, it was realized that trouble had moved much closer to home. It was generally believed, however, that Japan would confine her actions towards China: "She wouldn't dare offend Britain or the United States," was the usual comment. That she was soon to do so was not really surprising and people in Hong Kong, especially the more realistic, began to feel that we could easily become involved.

Japan seized Peiping (Peking) in July 1937. This seizure of their cultural centre so enraged the Chinese nation that it resulted in a drawing together of all the factional leaders in a united front, under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, against the common enemy. In August, the Japanese dropped bombs in the centre of Shanghai with heavy loss of civilian life. In September she machine-gunned from the air the British Ambassador whilst he was travelling by train between Shanghai and Hankow and followed this by sinking the American river gun-boat, USS *Pannay*, on the Yangtse. Neither Britain nor America took really firm action over these incidents and this encouraged Japan into further acts of aggression against China. She moved her army, navy and airforce into and around Shanghai and we listened with amazement and admiration to the news reports of the heroic stand by the poorly equipped and inexperienced Chinese army which held out for three months, while Chinese bombers went into action against the Japanese aircraft carrier *Idzumo* which was anchored just off the *Bund*. However it was all too evident that the situation could not last. The



Chinese had decided that this was to be a long-term war and were prepared to fight city by city, town by town. They considered that a gradual withdrawal would lure the enemy to deeper penetration of their country, thereby over-extending their supply lines; the withdrawal would be combined with a scorched earth policy. The seat of Government was to be moved twelve hundred miles up river westwards to Chungking. Nanking fell into Japanese hands in December, 1937 but remained the recognized national capital to which the Government of China returned at the end of the second world war. The planned withdrawal from the coast resulted in the trade of the Yangtse basin and the industrial wealth of Shanghai being directed to Hong Kong, thereby stimulating a phase of economic expansion hitherto unknown in the colony. By 1938 Japan had turned her attention to South China and, with the fall of Canton in October of that year, the influx of refugees into Hong Kong had intensified. In the ten years to 1941, Hong Kong's population had almost doubled to over one and a half million.

Meanwhile our family life had gone on undisturbed. Elizabeth was doing very well at school and, at home, she was a great companion for her father. She was an obedient, helpful and extraordinarily thoughtful child and took a great pride and interest in John's welfare. We had always encouraged her to exercise judgment and to make her own decisions. As a result of this, she was responsible and mature beyond her years. John had completely outgrown his early handicap and, in 1939, had joined Elizabeth at the Diocesan Girls' Junior School in Kowloon Tong. There was, however, one aspect of his health over which I was very much concerned. This was the frequency and severity with which he would go down with acute bronchitis: at times no sooner was he over one bout and appeared to be recovering when the next attack would come on. He had a loving and sensitive nature and, in spite of the set backs to his health, he was never spoiled or pampered although, in order to avoid showdowns in a clash of wills, I always had to keep thinking ahead in respect of his reaction to any situation. Billy was always ready to play with and enjoy the children and left most policy matters to me. We were a happy and contented family.

After Mother's death in 1938 we no longer made our annual visits to the Peak but Grace was soon to move over to their new home, in Norfolk Road, which was situated immediately opposite to ours. From this time on our two families saw a great deal of one another. There was an open space between us which had been reserved for future use by some government institution. Horace did not rest until he had leased a portion of this and immediately began to develop it as an annex to his property. Here he had a beautiful lawn tennis court laid, and a small pavilion built beside the court. He turned the rest of the leased land into a huge vegetable garden and such was his enthusiasm that he soon grew enough to supply, not only our two households but others besides, with a variety of vegetables in season superior in quality to any that could be obtained from the best market gardens. We played a lot of tennis and went often to one or other of the beaches along the Castle Peak Road. Sometimes, on a Sunday or a holiday, they would come across to us for breakfast and Billy would play "trains" with the children. The two sets of electric trains had arrived from Czechoslovakia just after Mother's death — one set had been ordered by her — the carriages and accessories were similar and interchangeable with Hornby models and were much less expensive. Billy would set the railway track to weave in and out of our bedrooms, much to the delight of the children who learnt to operate the points and signals with increasing dexterity. Sometimes we would spend the evening with Grace and Horace. Horace had installed one of the first air-conditioned units introduced for home use and, in delightfully comfortable temperatures (whilst other people sweltered in the heat) we would listen to his favourite records on a late model radiogram fitted with an automatic record-change mechanism which had not long come on the market.

Soon after the Munich crisis in 1938 Billy had decided that war was inevitable and had joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. "I want to be ready," he said simply, "when the time comes. Only if I am prepared will I be able to contribute something worthwhile." His first preference was to be a member of the Field Company Engineers in which he enlisted as a sapper. He was later transferred to the 4th Battery where he became a sergeant in charge of the searchlights guarding the

eastern entrance to Hong Kong harbour known as Lyemun Pass. They used to have training once a week and sometimes a camp at weekends.

One day Billy told me he had been offered a commission but he had declined.

"Why did you do that, Billy?" I would have liked him to be an officer.

"Well, being an officer," Billy replied, "would mean a lot of time in the mess, which I am not prepared to give. I would far rather come home and spend it with the children. In any case, what does it matter what I am, if I do my duty? As far as I can see, the only advantage of being an officer is that you would fare better if anything should happen to me and, as I have no intention of getting killed, I would rather remain a sergeant."

This was his philosophy and, with this, I had to be content.

Hong Kong was at last beginning to feel trouble conscious and, especially after the bombing in Shanghai, there was a great deal of publicity given to air raid precautions and the construction of tunnels for shelters for the masses was extensively planned. I took a training course in air raid precautions and found it interesting and quite intensive. We were required to sit a three-hour paper at its completion. When the results were known, the lecturer complimented me on my performance. It appeared that in my answers I had managed to explain in simple language some of the complicated procedures, making them more easily understood by the average laymen and, as they were about to revise their manual, they wished to modify its expression, using my interpretation as a guide. It was only natural that I should feel gratified by such praise.

With both the children at school I must have found time on my hands because it was in September, 1939, just after the outbreak of war in Europe that I asked Billy one day:

"I would like to do a secretarial course, Billy. What do you think of the idea?"

"I think it is a good one. But are you planning to work and, if so, where do you think you would be likely to find something suitable? You are not a youngster, you know, and you would not like a junior position."

"I thought I would go up to see Mr. Finnigan. He might have something for me." Mr. Finnigan was the Registrar at the University and I had always found him kind and approachable.

Billy was somewhat taken aback at, what he considered, my audacity. "You have a bit of a nerve," he said, "what makes you think that the University would take you without previous experience?"

"I can but ask."

Mr. Finnigan was kindness itself. "You are joking" was his first comment.

"Oh no, I am not," I explained. "The children are both at school now and I feel that I might as well do something worthwhile."

"If you are really serious I would very much like to have you work in the University. I am pretty certain that the medical faculty job will be falling vacant in January but, if that doesn't materialize, I will make a position for you. You see, you are familiar with university matters — you have been a student and you know the staff — and, what is most important, you won't be running away to get married! In fact you are just the type of person I am looking for. Go on and do your training and as soon as I have something definite, I will let you know."

I did a "crash" course. The head of the secretarial school was most interested when he realized I had a position lined up at the University. I had to learn typewriting by myself but he gave me personal instruction in all matters which, according to him, went towards making a good secretary.

I joined the University as Secretary to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine early in January, 1940. Gordon King, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, was Dean at the time.

My predecessor stayed on for two days to show me the work and then I was left to my own resources. "The Dean is a very nice person but he is seldom in," she had said. "He has to spend most of his time at the hospital. You will just have to work things out for yourself, make decisions and act on them. As a matter of fact you will find that you are the Dean in all but name." After she had gone I was thoroughly

worried and afraid. Fortunately Mr. Finnigan dropped in to see how I was getting on.

When I told him of my anxieties and confessed that I felt I would never be able to manage, he smiled and said: "I am sure you will manage without the slightest difficulty. Why, in two weeks' time you will be telling *me* what to do! But, seriously, don't hesitate to ask me anything you don't understand. There's not much I don't know about the medical faculty and, in any case, you or I could always ask May Witchell. She was in this office, you know, before she went to the Vice-Chancellor's. I shall be retiring in May but before this I shall have seen you on your feet. I will look in on you as I pass each day."

Mr. Finnigan kept his promise.

As he had forecast I settled in easily and soon became very much interested in all aspects of my work. Most of it was of a familiar pattern in that I knew what a student needed in the way of administrative planning and guidance, the only difference being that I was now tackling the situation from the other side.

The importance of providing facilities for educating local aspirants on the principles and practice of western medicine had been recognized in the last century and the 1880s had seen the establishment of the Hong Kong College of Medicine. Its association with names like Dr. (later Sir) Patrick Manson as dean, and Dr. (later Sir) James Cantlie as secretary, had ensured its quality and standing, and the College had attracted students from the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and even from India. One of its graduates was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Chinese Republic. When the University of Hong Kong was opened in 1912, the College became the new University's Faculty of Medicine.

Hong Kong University's medical course is a six-year course modelled on that of British Universities and its degree is recognized by the General Medical Council of Great Britain. Student numbers in the six years now (1940) totalled nearly 300, applications for admission having greatly increased in recent years because of the relatively peaceful conditions in Hong Kong as compared with the general unrest and war in Europe and in China. A quota system had therefore been introduced limiting

entries into the first year, and repeated failures were soon weeded out of the course.

Professor Gordon King's clinical work at the Queen Mary Hospital and Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital did indeed claim much of his attention but at the same time he was fully conscious of his commitments in the Faculty Office. This was situated in a small, rather dreary room in the main building of the University, the only natural light coming from an inner courtyard. The two large desks were placed front to front in the centre of the room, occupying almost the entire floor space. We sat facing one another and the telephone was set on a small stand with a chain attached which ran on a track extending across the two desks. When either wished to use the instrument, it could simply be pulled along by the chain. In this confidential atmosphere the Secretary to the Dean was kept fully acquainted with all matters concerning faculty or students. She was duty bound to listen in to all telephone conversations and to be present at all interviews; in fact, in the two years that I was in office, I was asked to stay away on only one occasion, when a final year student had to be disciplined on his failure to attend lectures and clinics.

A good deal of the work was of routine nature but it was at all times interesting and varied. Even the frequent re-arrangement of time tables and clinical rosters, as the terms followed one another in rapid succession, was never dull. Annual examinations were held both in May and in December and when these were on, we were doubly busy. Due to changes in the length of the course at some stage, some of the students completed their finals after the May examinations whilst others followed the calendar to the year's end. May Witchell and I typed all the examination question papers on stencils in a locked room in the Registrar's office, duplicated them and burnt the stencils in an incinerator specially provided for this purpose.

One of my duties was to keep detailed records of all students and, in so doing, they became known to me like personal friends. Soon, as each student stepped into the faculty office, I was able to address him by name. This seemed to please them and, before long, they would come to me with their problems for assistance or advice. To be so much of a *persona grata* with the

student body was, to me, a deeply satisfying experience. At the last meeting of the University Council in 1941 my appointment as Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine was ratified.

A sudden and dramatic announcement by government in July, 1940 ordered the registration of all women and children in preparation for immediate departure from Hong Kong. There was to be a general evacuation to Australia and only those who had specific war-time duties would be allowed to remain. The order was addressed to civilians as well as to families of service personnel. Unfortunately one aspect of it was made deliberately vague: to whom did the order, in fact, apply? The mention of Australia raised at once the question of her White Australia policy and all who were not of pure European origin, that is, the local inhabitants, realized that in all probability it did not concern them. And yet, the Volunteers had been told specifically that, in the event of hostilities, they would be regarded as service personnel and promise had been made that their families would be taken care of in the same way as those of regular troops. It was not surprising therefore that some of the Volunteers read the evacuation order as being applicable to their families. Enquiries at registration centres threw no light on the confusion so that many who should not have done so obeyed the registration order and made ready to depart. No one stopped them and within a few days the evacuees had sailed. On reaching Manila, passengers were divided into two categories: those of pure European descent were sent on to Australia; the Eurasian families were returned to Hong Kong. It was then explained that Australia could not be persuaded to give them refuge even in the event of open war. Thus was a delicate situation handled with bungling indelicacy; it did much to damage the morale of the local Volunteers.

Professor Gordon King's family, consisting of his wife, Dr. Mary King, and their three daughters were amongst the evacuees who went to Australia. Before leaving Hong Kong, Mary had asked me what we intended doing about our children. I confessed that we were very concerned over their safety but we were unable to decide what was for the best. "Don't hesitate to send them to me any time you are worried. I will look after them for you." She knew that I had been com-

mitted to a war-time duty but she knew also that sooner or later we would wish to get the children away. Little did she think that, within a few short months, her offer would be taken up; but hers was a nature brimming over with kindness and generosity and, even had she known, it would not have made the slightest difference. Had a request been made for her to take them with her, she would not have hesitated.

The Volunteers and the A.R.P. were not the only active organizations. The dynamic and tireless Dr. Selwyn-Clarke, Director of Medical Services, had been deeply involved in planning the medical services for emergency action. One of the schemes was for the major government hospitals to be cleared, as soon as hostilities began, for the reception and treatment of mass casualties. This meant that large institutions such as the University were needed to serve as relief hospitals to enable the plan to be put into effect. Other institutions were to become emergency or casualty clearing hospitals. The staffing of these hospitals alone was a huge undertaking but plans were well advanced and practice mobilizations had been held.

The University Relief Hospital was to have a maximum capacity of six hundred beds (camp stretchers). Gordon King had been appointed Medical Officer-in-Charge from its inception and Professor Faid, head of the Physics Department and Chief Warden of student hostels was Lay Superintendent. The appointment of a Lady Superintendent had been included in the initial planning but, after I had taken a course of instruction on hospital administration and we had held a practice mobilization, this position was not considered to be necessary and I became the Secretary of the University Relief Hospital. As far as we were able, such attention as was necessary was given to hospital matters. These were carried out in conjunction with our normal function as a faculty office. During the year 1941 supplies and equipment earmarked for the hospital were sent to us from time to time.

Meanwhile the situation was growing more tense with each passing month and Billy became increasingly anxious about the children. He told me he could not forget pictures he had seen as a youngster, of children of central European



countries suffering malnutrition as a result of starvation during the first world war, and he did not want this to happen to ours. In the spring of 1941 John had one of his attacks of acute bronchitis. The doctor said it was quite obvious that Hong Kong's climate was totally unsuited to his constitution and urged me to send him away to Australia. "You will find that as soon as he leaves Hong Kong his health will improve. Keep him here and he will in time become a permanent invalid. The choice is yours." This opinion was shared by the Acting Professor of Medicine and by Gordon King who encouraged me to send John and Elizabeth to join his family in Melbourne. The situation posed a major problem for us.

Although people in Hong Kong were under the stress of insecurity, many of the wives who had been evacuated to the safety of Australia now complained bitterly at their continued and enforced exile. At the same time their husbands in Hong Kong were just as vociferous in their protests. In spite of this, Government was quite adamant in its refusal to permit evacuees to return to Hong Kong. Furthermore if anyone should return from leave in the United Kingdom, they would be allowed to land in Hong Kong for the briefest of visits and only on condition that they would go on to Australia. Jimmy Jack's wife, Sybil, and their two daughters were in this situation. They had only recently returned from England and were obliged to re-embark almost immediately for Australia.

With Billy's anxiety over the children and with the doctor's warning regarding John, I began to feel a growing conviction that the time had come to accept Mary King's generous offer, especially as Sybil Jack had kindly indicated that she could look after the children at least as far as Sydney. This certainly seemed to be a heaven-sent opportunity but John was only five years old. Was it wise to send him away? How could we be certain that the doctors were right? Will there be war and, if so, communications would be severed and how would we be able to continue their support? When it came to making a decision we were beset by these and many other doubts and fears. Billy and I discussed the problem from every angle and, wherever we turned, there seemed to be no other way out of our predicament. The alternative,

that I should take them myself, could not seriously be entertained because of Australia's strict immigration policy. It was clear to us that if the children went without me, especially in the care of people of pure European descent, they would almost certainly be accepted without question. Passport authorities in Hong Kong were sympathetic and were inclined to agree with me on this point. But, were I to travel with them, my passport would at once betray my birth and even if we were permitted to land in Australia, there could be no possibility of any prolonged stay which was so essential to us. No. The only solution possible was to seize the opportunity so happily presented and to be thankful that we had such wonderful friends.

I wrote at once to Mary King explaining our problem, my suggestion being that if she would be willing to assume guardianship of the children, they could be sent to boarding schools. Her cabled reply was brief and to the point. "Children to live with me" was all it said, but it spoke volumes and I was overcome with gratitude.

And so, with only a few days to get them ready, we sent Elizabeth, aged eleven and John, a mere five-year-old, away on the old liner *Nellore*. The date was 5th May, 1941. It was to be over four years before I was to see them again. Some people thought me completely heartless; others appreciated our difficulties. It was indeed a dilemma but subsequent events fully justified the decision we made. Elizabeth did not feel the parting too keenly for, with her mature and sensible outlook, she could appreciate the necessity of our action. She readily accepted responsibility for John and became a little mother to him. John was too young, too emotionally upset at the thought of the impending separation to understand. He could not feel reconciled to leaving the security of home and parents and even the exciting prospect of going on a big ship offered but small comfort. When sailing day came we had lunch on board with them; John had great difficulty in fighting back the tears. As we stood on the wharf waiting for *Nellore* to depart, I could see his little hands clenched on the ship's railing. He said not a word. According to Sybil, it was bed-

time before he finally gave way to grief, and Elizabeth, unable to comfort him, shared his heartbreak.

We gave up the house in Kowloon Tong to move into a small flat. It was to be an all-out effort at economy so that funds in Australia could be built up in case of emergency. I could have asked Father for financial assistance but we felt this to be our personal problem and wished to handle it in our own way. Father seemed to approve our action and asked if I needed help. I agreed to accept a small allowance from him which enabled us to take a flat in King's Park without exceeding our planned budget.

Gordon King visited his family towards the end of the long vacation in August. On his return he told me that the children had settled in very well and although they had been through a winter in Melbourne, John had not had a single attack of bronchitis. He was looking forward to going to school in September. "So you need hold no worries over them." Professor King said. "As for Mary, she has taken John to her heart and is happy in the thought that she now has a son."

## AND WAR CAME

Many records, both official and unofficial, have been written about the Battle for Hong Kong and it is not my intention to attempt yet another. My story, however, would not be complete without an account of this short but tragic period of Hong Kong's history; such an account will tell only of events as I saw them and as they affected my personal life. Where memory has failed, gaps have been filled by reference to one or other of the above-mentioned records\*.

It was only natural that we should miss the children. The few days we had between our decision to send them and their actual departure had been so very full that little time had been left for thought but, after they had gone, our evenings seemed empty and our weekends lacked interest. We could only look forward to Elizabeth's letters which arrived with typical regularity. When I opened the first, a tooth fell out. "Oh dear!" thought I, "John has had a fall and has broken a tooth." This was not the case. It was merely the normal process of losing his milk teeth. Elizabeth had remembered that I had made a collection of hers and it now occurred to her that I might like to do likewise with John's. Her thoughtfulness in this and in other things continued to touch me deeply. In spite of long years of separation and the transference of early interests to new spheres, she was never to change.

As the days sped by strengthening conviction of the prudence of our decision became a real source of comfort. It was

---

\* "*A Record of the Actions of The Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in the Battle for Hong Kong. December, 1941*", Ye Olde Printerie, Ltd., Hong Kong (1953).

Luff, John — "*The Hidden Years. Hong Kong 1941-1945*", South China Morning Post, Ltd., Hong Kong (1967).

Ride, Lindsay — "*The Test of War*" in "*University of Hong Kong. The First 50 Years*", ed. Brian Harrison, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong (1962).

now not a case of if, but when, a state of emergency would arise. We learnt to adjust ourselves to doing without the children and found solace in the thought that, no matter what the future held, they would be safe. At the same time the understanding and attachment which Billy and I shared now found an avenue for broader expression. This has left me with a wealth of tender memories which thoughts of these six months never fail to bring to mind.

Meanwhile preparations in all emergency organizations, and especially training with the Volunteers, had intensified. Billy was often away. We all knew that the Japanese were "just across the border" and were merely biding their time. This waiting for something to happen was a strain in itself — yet, incredibly, the protesting wives in Australia still clamoured for permission to return to Hong Kong.

At this time there were major changes in both civil and military administration in the colony. In September, 1941, a new Governor took office and the General Officer Commanding Hong Kong Garrison was also replaced. Inevitably there were changes to our defence plans. In the middle of November, two battalions of Canadian troops arrived to reinforce our military strength. They were fine looking men and seemed to inject new life into our tired veins. As we watched them march up Nathan Road to their barracks, we experienced a sense of security. In spite of an appalling lack of air and naval power (it was claimed that we did not need a navy because we had sufficient large naval guns protecting our short coastline), this reinforcement to our garrison, when our need was most urgent, seemed to demonstrate that we had not been forgotten, nor were we to be left entirely to our own resources. Early in December, a new Colonial Secretary arrived.

We went about our normal activities. It was a case of living from day to day. Billy and I both had our work in which we continued to find great interest. In the University we had just moved into a larger and brighter office. Examinations were about to begin. It was a busy time. We had set aside Sunday, 7th December for getting my new office organized. On the day before it was rumoured that there had been much activity on the part of the Japanese across the border but, on

investigation, our intelligence officers had reported that all was well. In fact, they said, the Japanese had been particularly friendly and had suggested sporting socials, such as football matches, with our troops. As we crossed the harbour on Sunday morning the naval ships were not at their usual anchorage. The harbour looked strangely bare. We had worked at the office for perhaps an hour when May Witchell, the Vice-Chancellor's secretary, came in. "Billy", she said, "do you know that the Volunteers have been called up?" "Oh, no," Billy replied, "I must go home at once. Thanks for telling me."

The Volunteers had been ordered to report at 3 p.m. No one was certain whether this was not just another practice. On our way home, Billy told me he was not happy about leaving me on my own. We agreed that, after leaving him at Headquarters, I should return to the University to seek Professor Faid's advice. We said "Goodbye" quite cheerfully at 3 p.m. Little did I think that, except for a brief glimpse behind a barbed wire fence, this was the last I was to see of him.

Bill Faid had been one of Billy's closest friends in the University and in the Relief Hospital planning I was to be billeted with him and his wife. I had no hesitation now in turning to him for advice. This is what he said:

"The situation is certainly disturbing, Jean, but I am sure nothing will happen tonight, so you can safely go home. Why don't you pack a few things when you come up in the morning and be prepared to stay here for a day or two? Jeanne and I would be delighted to have you."

I spent the evening tidying my desk and packed a bag ready for the morning. I had just gone to bed at midnight when the telephone rang. It was a wrong number. At six o'clock the next morning it rang again. This time it was Gordon King. "We've been ordered to stand by, Jean, so you had better come up straight away. Don't waste time having breakfast. My boy will give you something when you arrive."

It was a beautiful morning, giving promise of a bright and sunny day. I had packed sufficient clothing for a few days but now I threw in my slacks, grabbed my fur coat from the wardrobe, and a small radiator, in case the weather should change. On my way out I picked up an ivory miniature of

Mother. When I was able to visit the flat again, it was occupied by Japanese officers. Most of our possessions had been removed. We never knew by whom nor did we see any of it again.

All was quiet and calm as I crossed on the vehicular ferry just before seven o'clock on Monday, 8th December. The harbour seemed more empty still but there was no sign of unrest in the streets. The University, being situated on the mid-levels of Hong Kong, most of the buildings, including the staff houses, had a view of the harbour looking across to Kowloon. We had just finished a hurried breakfast at 8 a.m. when the noise of heavy explosions reverberated through the air. Running out to the verandah we could see clouds of smoke and dust rising from the aerodrome at Kai Tak and faced the shocking realization that war had come! It was later confirmed that simultaneous with their attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese planes had bombed our aerodrome. In a single raid, our obsolete planes were destroyed and Kai Tak was so damaged as to be completely out of action.

We rushed down to the main building. Students were assembling at the entrance to the Great Hall. Being inside they had not seen the bombing and, although they had heard explosions, they could think only of their ordeal of the moment: their examinations. We advised them to go home. There would be no examinations; the University was to become a hospital.

In the Great Hall tables and chairs were soon exchanged for camp stretchers, for this was to be our main ward. The hospital staff began to arrive. Doctors, matron, sisters, nurses and pharmacists all reported for duty. The students vacated one of the hostels to accommodate the nursing staff. By mid-day we were ready to receive patients. There was, however, not a sign of hospital orderlies, stretcher bearers or domestic staff, nor did we receive any supplies. We learnt later that organized fifth column propaganda had kept many of the workers at home, and the transport service so carefully planned had completely collapsed. Moreover it was found that most of the vehicles requisitioned for use had been systematically sabotaged.

We appealed to the students for assistance which they gave readily. Many had reported for other emergency duty but some, including those who had been sent back, through a lack of vehicles, from the auxiliary transport service enrolled as orderlies and stretcher bearers. Telephone operators, ground staff and domestic workers around the University made up the rest of our hospital personnel.

The typical December weather with its cloudless blue skies and bright sunny days afforded enemy aircraft every advantage but bombing, at this stage, was surprisingly light. However, several bombs did land in the crowded central district. The Queen Mary Hospital was at once cleared for this emergency and we admitted our first patients.

Realizing that communications would soon be severed, Gordon King immediately arranged for a transfer of funds to Melbourne and I sent all we had. Wednesday, 10th December was Billy's birthday and I telephoned battery headquarters to speak to him. After a long wait — he was down in the engine room of the search-lights — he came breathless and excited. He was well and busy but they were short of food, having received no fresh supplies. A few words only. I never spoke to him again. The same night we heard over the radio the devastating news that the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Repulse* had been sunk off Singapore. This was a bitter blow to morale.

Military action during the early days was confined to the New Territories where our regular troops held a line along the Kowloon hills covering the Shing Mun reservoir and catchment areas. This was a most strategic point. There was of course no question of holding out for any length of time, the general policy being a planned withdrawal, with demolition squads destroying bridges and other lines of communication to delay the enemy advance. The Japanese, having been ready for months, were well equipped and familiar with the country. They came on with clockwork precision. Our troops were outnumbered, surprised and badly handicapped, chiefly because of last minute changes in defence planning. Their heavy boots were also unsuitable for action on the dry, grassy slopes of the hills (the Japanese wore sand shoes). By Thursday, 11th



December, evacuation to the island had begun. This was followed on Friday afternoon by withdrawal of the police force, leaving the rabble and looters to do as they pleased in Kowloon. Those who were forced to remain must have felt completely abandoned.

On the strength of their success the Japanese commander sent a Peace Mission on Saturday morning: capitulate — or else. There was naturally no question of surrender and shelling was immediately added to the bombing which was now intensified. The University was hit by a misdirected shell and, although damage was slight, it was decided to move the hospital up to another of the student hostels. This move made the transfer of patients more difficult because the hostels had no approach road for cars or ambulances and, owing to the shelling, transfers had to be made at night.

General conditions on the island were distressing and chaotic. The food situation was bad. There was food in plenty in the godowns (storehouses) for we had been prepared for a long seige, but the breakdown of transport facilities had meant that little in the way of fresh supplies could be distributed. Gordon King managed to requisition a serviceable truck for the hospital and the students were sent out to replenish our now meagre stock. All that could be obtained was rice and soya beans which, at first, we were inclined to consider unpalatable — the value of soya bean as a rich source of vitamin B had not as yet been appreciated — but when our stock continued to diminish, we relied entirely on the students' effort.

Even worse than the shortage of food was the water situation. The enemy, having captured the reservoir area on the Kowloon hills, simply turned off the flow which supplied water to the island, so that we had only a mere trickle from the taps fed by the smaller reservoirs in Hong Kong which were already low because of the seasonal shortage of rain. Wells were dug frantically but this gave hardly any relief.

At the same time the population had greatly increased. It was but natural that people should have rushed over from Kowloon for the greater protection which the island offered, but when food and water gave out and they wished to return to

Kowloon, they were unable to do so because there was by now no communication between Hong Kong and the mainland. To add to our troubles, the electricity failed. Somehow we managed to carry on.

It is amazing how hope can bolster morale. There had been a persistent rumour that help was close at hand: a strong Chinese army was on its way to relieve our beleaguered garrison. This rumour was supported even by our normally responsible press which carried details of the position and strength of the relieving force; but when day followed day and no army appeared, the demoralizing effect on the general population was disastrous.

The increased shelling of our positions was a prelude to preparations for an enemy landing. An initial attempt was made on the night of 15th December, exactly a week after hostilities began. The attempt was foiled by the combined efforts of the guns and searchlights of 4th Battery whose action was commended. This cheered us considerably but the enraged enemy retaliated by prolonged spells of shelling and heavy air raids. Not only 4th Battery but Belcher's Fort, which was very close to the University, and Mount Davis, all came in for punishment. As a result of this many of our guns were silenced and I was told that 4th Battery had been evacuated. That night, however, I could still see the searchlights playing across the harbour and knew that, although the gun crew had been withdrawn, Billy was still at his post.

The night of 18/19 December was dark with heavy clouds and fiercely burning oil tanks at North Point had covered that part of the island in a pall of black smoke. Taking advantage of the darkness the enemy landed at several points and, in the early hours of 19th December, some of the worst atrocities of the war were committed. Our Field Ambulance and A.R.P. workers, as well as the fighting forces, shared the same fate and many were shot or bayoneted to the fiendish yells and laughter of enemy troops drunk with the wine of victory. One or two of our people, feigning death, escaped and eventually brought news back to the city. The stories that came to us, obviously garbled but none the less graphic, insisted that Billy had been among those killed. Trying to cope with hospital matters arising out of every fresh emergency kept me well occupied

during the day, but the agony of doubt, suspense and fear disturbed my rest at night. I was deeply grateful for the solicitous protection afforded me by Gordon King and Bill Faid who guarded me from the rumour mongers — their every kind gesture giving me added comfort. They promised to let me know as soon as there was specific information. Meanwhile I had to be content just to hope and to pray.

After the surrender, when the entire garrison was congregated at a refugee camp in North Point, Billy was not to be found among them, nor had anyone seen or heard anything of him and his party since the gun crew was withdrawn. It was not until mid-January, when official contact with Kowloon was resumed, that we had definite information that the remnants of 4th Battery, through a stroke of good fortune, had been overlooked by the Japanese troops during the landing. They were taken prisoners on 21st December and sent immediately over to a camp in Kowloon.

After the enemy had landed on the island heavy fighting took place from North Point, around the coast past Lyemun, Tsai Wan and Stanley to Aberdeen, and through the gaps and over the hills to Repulse Bay and Deep Water Bay. Our troops resisted stubbornly and gallantly but, inevitably, the end drew near. We suffered heavy losses, but the enemy did not get off lightly. Still the fighting went on. Christmas Day dawned. Messages from the Governor and GOC to the fighting forces urged them to "fight on" and "hold fast" — each day of action in Hong Kong was of vital importance to the allied cause. By afternoon enemy troops were marching towards the city. At 3.15 p.m. on 25th December, 1941 a white flag flew over Government House. After seventeen days of bitter fighting the garrison had surrendered.

The days that followed were wrought with anxiety and uncertainty, not knowing what fresh humiliation each day would bring. Some of the incidents appear now to be trifling but at the time they loomed very large. I well remember the night when Bill Faid and I, answering a call for assistance from the telephone operator, were held at point of bayonet by a sentry. With our arms raised above our heads we were incredulous witnesses to Formosan troops leading their horses into the Great

Hall which was being used as a stable. Although no harm came to us, and it lasted but twenty minutes, it was none the less a frightening experience.

As long as the fighting was on, there was some semblance of law and order but, after the surrender, the rabble took over and systematic looting began. For our own protection we had been confined to within University grounds but we could see King's College opposite being stripped of every movable item of furniture and equipment, room by room and floor by floor. In the University the Japanese took possession of the main building and some of the staff houses, then they looted the Science block, which had been opened only three months before, and the medical laboratories, taking away all valuable scientific equipment and records. It was said that most of this was immediately shipped to Japan.

As work in the University Relief Hospital lightened our attention was turned once more to the welfare of our students. They had served us well during hostilities and it was only right that their help should be recognized. The University decided to confer war-time degrees on those medical students whose examinations were so rudely interrupted. Later a second degree ceremony was held in which all students about to take their final examinations in the following May were granted similar status. All other students were given a statement certifying the subjects or part of his course of study he had completed. During the Japanese occupation most of them went into "Free" China where, with the help of Gordon King who had escaped there, they were able to complete their studies in Chinese universities.

On 6th January, 1942 all "enemy aliens" were ordered to report with what possessions they could carry at the Murray Parade Ground prior to internment. Many thought that this would be a good thing because conditions in the city had rapidly deteriorated since the cessation of fighting. They believed that, in internment, they would at least be housed and fed in accordance with international standards for the treatment of prisoners-of-war. They were soon to learn that the Japanese had their own standards. As a first step they were herded into cheap harbour front hotels where they had to put up with the most humiliating conditions. For food, they were issued

with a few ounces of uncooked rice with no facilities for cooking. Two sections of the community were spared this horror. The Peak residents were allowed to stay on temporarily in the Peak and the Vice-Chancellor undertook responsibility for all who were at the University which, besides university and hospital staff, now included many who had been rendered homeless. This was only a brief respite. By the end of January, both the Peak residents and all but a few at the University had been pushed into the already overcrowded camp at Stanley.

Just before the clearance of the University, one of our Chinese medical staff had taken over as Medical Officer-in-Charge of the University hospital. He asked if I would be willing to assist him for a short period. I was quite agreeable to do this because I badly wanted an opportunity to see Billy. Furthermore I felt I needed a little time to consider the question of whether or not to go into internment. It was a big decision and not one to be made lightly. The Vice-Chancellor gave permission for me to stay, on the condition that two students would be permitted to stay with me. Bill Faid, as Chief Warden, made the selection.

"Hohlov's undoubtedly your man, Sir. He's the Rock of Gibraltar. And I would recommend his friend Zaitzev as the other."

I had noticed the two Russian lads, especially the blond and sturdy looking Hohlov. He had most pleasing manners and was always the first to volunteer for any service. He had driven the University truck daily through the shelling and bombing to fetch our supplies. He was strong too. We would watch with some wonder at the ease with which he carried a bag of rice, weighing over 220 lbs on his shoulder, and literally run up the steep hill leading to the hostel in which we housed our main store.

The Russians were classed as "third nationals" and were issued with identification passes to this effect. Like the Chinese they were not to be interned. With the University hospital now under the new administration I, too, was given a pass which, although endorsed "enemy alien", enabled me to move around quite freely, even to Kowloon. This was exactly what I needed.

In the course of the next fortnight I visited Stanley camp twice. I wished to see it at first hand. At that time there was a daily delivery of bread and milk to the camp hospital by a medical department van, which first called at the University, so transport was easily arranged. What I saw in Stanley was not at all encouraging. People were already showing early signs of malnutrition. Hunger and despair was written on almost every face.

Meanwhile the troops had been transferred to a large army camp at Shamshuipo in Kowloon. We made three attempts to see Billy. We crossed over on the Star ferry which had resumed service but, as there was no other transport facility, we had to walk several miles each way. The guards at Shamshuipo were very strict and often beat up or fired on both prisoners and visitors to the camp. On only one occasion was I fortunate enough to be able to catch a glimpse of Billy, but it was at such a distance and through the barbed wire fence, that there was no possibility of an exchange of words. In fact, it was all I could do to keep him in sight. The men were all dressed alike in their khaki uniforms and, lining the fence several rows deep, they resembled so many caged animals. It was a harrowing experience. I decided then that besides exposing myself to a certain amount of danger, I could serve no useful purpose to Billy by staying out of internment. At the same time, if I went into Stanley with the other families, there would always be the possibility of an exchange of prisoners, and I would then be able to join the children.

The Russian lads were a great help and a real source of comfort. Except for the trips into Stanley, one would always accompany me, no matter where I went or what I chose to do. There was never a sign of unwillingness or of impatience. The other, now joined by a friend, would stay at home and "scrounge" for food. We had little money. What we had was saved for food bargains in the hope that they might reach the prisoners in camp. And yet, there would always be a hot meal waiting when I came home. How they managed this I would not know.

Ever since the war began I had not had an opportunity of seeing either of our families but we had kept in touch. The

Gittinses had suffered heavy loss. Three of the girls' husbands had served with the Volunteers and two, Ernest Fincher and Arthur Bliss, had been killed during the fighting. Mabel's husband, George Hall, was now a prisoner-of-war at Shamshuipo with Billy, and Mabel herself, with her three children, were in Stanley camp. Mr. and Mrs. Gittins were with their two widowed daughters, Irene and Phyllis. They had decided against going into internment. Like so many others who lived in Kowloon, they had lost all their possessions. They were later to go into Free China and only returned to Hong Kong at the end of the war.

Of my own family, Father, by a stroke of good fortune, had been resting in Macao at the outbreak of war and, although he was forced to return later to Hong Kong, he was not molested to any large extent. His age was a great asset.

M. K. Lo, on the other hand, was not so fortunate. Because of his position in public affairs, he was arrested immediately after the occupation. After several days' detention, he was released on the condition that he would join the new administration. He was encouraged to do this by our own government officials, in the hope that he might be able to help the people of Hong Kong, or even extend some assistance to the internees. When I was able to visit his family, Grace and Horace had come over from Kowloon. They all pressed me most warmly to make my home with them. I had, however, decided that I would go into internment. As we said "Goodbye" I wondered when, and even if, we would ever meet again.

The long years of Japanese occupation were extremely distressing for "M.K." Besides the anxiety he felt over the safety of his family, and the privations brought about by war-time conditions, he was severely restricted in his movements and was spied upon at all times. He never knew who was a friend or who a foe.

By mid-1942 many people had found Hong Kong quite untenable and were endeavouring to leave. This was not achieved without difficulty and the agony of suspense while waiting for permission added to their discomforts. Grace and Horace, with Shirley and "M.K.'s" three daughters, joined the general exodus. I am not competent to speak of their experiences

in China but I know that in many respects they suffered far greater hardship than we did in internment. They had, for instance, to flee continually in the face of enemy advance. But even this was preferable to putting up with the constant humiliation and frustration of a Hong Kong under Japanese rule.

Eddie normally lived in Shanghai. He was visiting Hong Kong with his family when war broke out. In one of the worst bombing raids on the Peak he sustained serious injury to both lower limbs — one had to be amputated above the ankle and the other below the knee. It was heart-rending to see him, a six-footer, now looking so old and shrunken, being carried around by his son Eric. Eddie himself was wonderfully cheerful, confiding in me his plans to go to the United States, as soon as he was able, to have artificial limbs fitted. I was lost in admiration and felt humbled at this truly magnificent display of courage.

The Japanese had taken control of our Medical Department but expected our workers to carry on with their duties at little or no remuneration. Dr. Selwyn-Clarke rather welcomed the opportunity this offered to be of some help to POWs and internees. He worked against tremendous odds, especially in time and in money but, with his drive and his tact, coupled with a fearless endeavour, he managed to gain for the hospitals many concessions and, more important still, desperately needed drugs and medical supplies.

It will be remembered that K. C. Yeo, Florence's husband, was a senior medical officer in the Department of Health. He was therefore forced by this circumstance into working under the Japanese. He was arrested and imprisoned and, although later set free, he led a miserable existence. Poor Florence, with her husband in constant danger and having little means of support for her three young children, her situation was at times quite desperate.

A fortnight had passed since my friends had been sent into internment. There was little activity in the hospital yet our days were very full. Between visits to the camps we packed away some of the Faids' possessions and took them over to their German friends for safe keeping. I knew it would not be long before I, too, would have to go.



Gordon King, although no longer in charge of the hospital, had obtained permission, because of professional commitments, to postpone his entry into internment camp. He was making preparations through contacts for escape. He was to be dressed in village clothes and, at a given time, was to walk over the hills and across the border. Although he was an Englishman, he had lived in north China for many years. He spoke Mandarin fluently and, except for his blue eyes, might easily have passed for a northern Chinese. But this was not the north and, in the event of an emergency, he felt he needed some knowledge of the Cantonese language. He came to me in the evenings for practice in conversation. One night he said:

"Tomorrow's the day."

"What are your chances?"

"Excellent — but I would need a forty-eight hour start before the alarm was raised."

I promised to give him all the time I could. The next morning I called at his house.

"Boy, I have just received a message from Dr. King. He will be away for several days. Would you please refer any questions to me?"

His Boy was loyal and intelligent. I felt sure that he knew what was afoot and sensed that he could be trusted.

I gave Gordon King three days and then told the students. They begged me to report the matter immediately.

"Don't worry," I said, "I intend going to see Dr. Selwyn-Clarke in the morning and will ask him to get me into Stanley camp. I will be safe there."

Selwyn would not at first listen to my request to go into camp, because of the frightful conditions. My Father, he said, would never forgive him. "If something is upsetting you at the University, come to my hospital. I will look after you. You know of course that you are in a far better position to help the camps from outside."

"I do appreciate that," I replied, "but it is essential for me to go into Stanley. I am sure you will agree when you know the reason."

I told him then that Gordon King had gone.

"Gone? What do you mean? *Where* has he gone?"

"I mean escaped."

"Escaped? Impossible! When did this happen?"

"Three days ago."

Discarding his usual suavity, Selwyn thumped the table. "Why wasn't I told of this before?"

"I wanted him to get away. His wife is looking after my children, you know. Can't you understand?"

"When can you go into Stanley? Tomorrow? Good. I will call for you at 10.30 in the morning and take you in myself."

"I will be ready."

I felt sad at the thought of leaving the boys and was vaguely concerned about their future welfare. It is true that I was myself going into virtual imprisonment, where conditions were shocking, especially in those early days. But I would at least be with some three thousand other internees and would at least — or so I thought — not have to worry where my next meal would come from. The students, on the other hand, would have to fend for themselves in occupied territory. They were penniless and stateless. And they were so young.

I was admitted as a patient into Tweed Bay Hospital in Stanley camp on 20th February, 1942. Selwyn took the precaution of changing my name slightly: instead of Mrs. W. M. Gittins, as on the University Relief Hospital staff list, he registered me as Miss Jean Gittins. My friends in camp were anxious for news but I could only give them sad tidings. The allied cause was going badly everywhere. Word had just come through of the fall of Singapore. These were indeed our darkest days.

## THE YEARS IN STANLEY

Had the Japanese set out with the intention of looking for a haven in which we would recover from our stresses, they could have found no better place than Stanley. As a haven for a small community it would have been perfect. Stanley peninsula juts into the sea from the south and more beautiful side of Hong Kong island. It is approached by a beach road, about half a mile in length, having branched off the main Island Road just past Tytam. At the neck of the peninsula the beach road bifurcates, one arm running straight into the peninsula, to end at the main gates of Stanley Prison. The other arm hugs the shore line to the right for a short distance and then winds its way up to the fort at Bluff Head.

With Stanley Bay on the west, along which nestles the fishing village of Stanley, and the sheltered waters of Tai Tam Bay on the east, the peninsula stretches south towards the blue Pacific Ocean. Tiny Tweed Bay lies on its south-eastern tip. When Stanley Prison was built in 1937, Tweed Bay became a part of the prison boundary and we lost one of our finest beaches. The peninsula is joined to Hong Kong by a short isthmus.

Before the war, Stanley had been a quiet resort where one could spend an afternoon away from the bustle of city life, to enjoy the gentle breezes that came from the ocean, and to listen to the sound of water lapping against the sand. Rows of bathing sheds lined the beach, and weekend houses dotted the hillside below the green-tiled Carmelite Convent.

On a ridge rising from the peninsula end of the isthmus were the school buildings and bungalow type staff houses of St. Stephen's College. On the southern end of the ridge stood several blocks of residential flats of modern design. They were

quarters for the British prison warders and their families. Below the flats was the prison hospital. On the other side of the road were the single warders' quarters and the prison officers' mess; in a sheltered hollow, between these and the sea, were seven blocks of drab looking flats built in the shape of a semicircle around a football field — quarters for Indian warders. Up on the ridge between the modern flats and the college buildings was an old cemetery, quiet and peacefully overlooking the boundless sea to the south and the island-studded bays on the west. Some of the gravestones, erected over one hundred years before, were weather-worn and shaded by scrub and small trees, the soil being too poor to support anything more lush. Here lay the dead of Hong Kong's first garrison. Many had succumbed to malaria. Some, it is said, had died as the result of drinking water which had been poisoned by the villagers who had resented the presence of the British.

During the fighting in December, 1941 there had been a gallant last stand in Stanley. Word of the surrender had not reached the troops in this area. After all else was sad and silent, the guns of Stanley fort could still be heard. Here, too, had been the scene of the most shocking of all atrocities. A band of drunken Japanese soldiers had invaded St. Stephen's Casualty Hospital. Medical Officers endeavouring to stop their progress into the wards had been cold-bloodedly shot and then bayoneted; nursing staff were raped and then raped again; patients were brutally bayoneted in their beds. The carnage was unbelievable.

As soon as the camp site was determined, advance parties had been sent to clear and to clean. They did their best under the circumstances. In a mass grave in the cemetery, they had laid to rest the remains of those who had given their lives but they could do nothing to obliterate the blood stains on the walls, the stairs and the grounds of the College. These remained throughout the war years, bearing mute testimony to their violent story.

But it was not as a haven that Stanley had been selected. It was merely a convenient spot in which to segregate the enemy aliens from the rest of the inhabitants of Hong Kong.

Had the entire peninsula been made available, the area would still have been utterly inadequate; to thrust some three thousand internees into a camp, the perimeter of which was defined by a barbed wire fence, enclosing a pitiful half a square mile, was an act of sheer barbarity unheard of in modern times. We later found it took exactly seven minutes of brisk walking to reach the farthest boundary from any given point in the Stanley Civilian Internment Camp. Within this confined space we existed for over three and a half years.

The first batch of internees soon arrived and, to them, after the unspeakable conditions of the hotels in town, the camp was a delightful refuge. Boatload after boatload poured in. The buildings became filled to overflowing: as many as thirty people were packed into a flat and nearly fifty in a bungalow of average size. And still they came. There was no privacy granted to women, no consideration given to the aged. Strangers of both sexes were pushed into the same cubicle. Single men were housed mainly in the College where classrooms became dormitories, while in the gallery, along the passages and under the stairs, one stumbled across people trying to make a home — just anywhere.

Those early days were perhaps the most distressing. Overcrowding was only one of the many problems. Another was a lack of furniture or equipment of any kind. No one expected luxuries but even such necessities as beds and cooking utensils were not supplied. Many slept for months and some even for years on the floor. The rations were even worse than the rooms. Rice, vegetables and either a few buffalo bones, or a little bad fish, comprised the main delivery for the better days. Our men were unused to boiling rice and were overwhelmed by trying to cook the rations for three or four hundred people at a time in makeshift conditions: open wood fires on cold windy days are not conducive to good cooking, neither are used dustbins the best type of saucepan for boiling rice. There is an art to rice cooking. The Chinese are past masters. Yet even a competent Chinese cook requires a special kind of rice boiler, sufficient fuel and a good stove to make rice into a food which is palatable and easily digested. Woe to the European tyro! The question of fire-

wood presented a perpetual and ever-growing problem. I well remember the day I arrived in Stanley when one section of the community was obliged to have their morning meal at 2.30 p.m. and their evening ration was served only an hour and a half later in order to conserve fuel.

How we used to look forward to the daily arrival of the van from the Medical Department bringing the bread and milk to the hospital. Dr. Selwyn-Clarke himself continued to come in occasionally. He was allowed to speak to no one except the Medical Officer-in-Charge of the hospital but it helped just to see him and to note a restrained smile of acknowledgement on his face. He was our only contact with the outside world.

On looking back those weeks seem like some nightmare. After a while things began to get a little organized. Volunteers worked ceaselessly to build stoves and kitchens, using bricks from buildings damaged during the bombing, and red clay as cement. Air raid shelters were dismantled for their materials with which temporary repairs were effected. We were fortunate in having the police force with us, the labour squads being formed mainly from their ranks. They took over the work of the kitchens and sanitation and volunteers supplemented the supply of firewood with grass from the hillsides.

The health of the camp began to go downhill. Within three months the first signs of avitaminosis were already in evidence even to the unprofessional eye, and Tweed Bay Hospital, stocked with but the barest semblance of medical supplies and equipment, and staffed with a minimum of under-nourished medical personnel, had a serious problem to face. Dr. Selwyn-Clarke was untiring in his efforts to better our conditions and, as a result of his representations, small rations of meat and flour were added to our diet.

"Have some protein," Professor Digby offered, as we sat in the sun outside the hospital one day.

"Thank you, Professor. Can you spare it?" "It" was a peanut. He had a small paper bag containing a handful.

"You had better take some while they last. We shall die eventually of starvation — or as the result of protein

deficiency — you know. I wonder who will be the last to go and who will bury him?"

"You shouldn't joke about such things, Professor."

He changed the subject. "How are your ankles today? Is there any pitting? Let's have a look." He pressed my ankles and my shins. "They seem to be all right so far. Let me know as soon as there is the slightest sign. Beri-beri must be treated early."

We both knew that I could not remain indefinitely in the hospital. I had applied to be billeted with the Faids in the Indian Quarters. "You should stay here just as long as they will let you. The food is better here than anywhere else in camp. You are getting a little milk each day, are you not?"

Dear Professor Digby. He was our Professor of Surgery and had known me as a child. He didn't like the idea of my being in the camp at all and was watching my health closely. As for himself, he was operating twice a week under the most trying conditions, just as he normally did at the Queen Mary Hospital.

The weather soon grew warm and muggy and, with the more humid atmosphere came an outbreak of dysentery in the camp. Fearing an epidemic the hospital authorities cleared a ward of mothers and their babies and, with them, I was transferred to a room in the married block. I renewed my application for transfer to the Indian quarters. One needed patience as well as endurance in Stanley: it was almost as difficult to change a billet as it was to escape from camp. At last permission was granted and I moved to join Bill and Jeanne Faid. They made me very welcome: "I promised Billy Gittins that I would look after you," Bill said, "and, by Golly, I will!"

The Faids had the smaller of two rooms in an upstairs flat in the two-storeyed Block 18. The other blocks were mostly three storeys high. They were built of red brick, with flat roofs of malthoid covering. There was no furniture of any description, nor was there a vestige of comfort to be found anywhere. The windows had badly fitting iron frames. The floors were concrete and were bare of covering. We had a verandah in front and an open passage at the back of the

flat connecting the kitchen, which boasted of a tap and a stone bench, and a bathroom with a tap and a native styled water closet, that is, a sanitary pan set below floor level, over which one squatted. In the larger of the two rooms were the Professor of Chemistry and Mrs. Byrne, and the Deputy-Director of Public Works and Mrs. Pegg. The redeeming feature of Block 18 was its view. Unlike the other blocks which looked on to the football field in the centre, we faced Tytam and the open sea beyond. This was to be our salvation.

American nationals were repatriated in June, 1942. We found this rather unsettling. At the same time we were hopeful that our turn might come one day. The *Asama Maru* sailed into Stanley Bay to pick up the repatriates and the entire camp must have been at the cemetery to watch their departure from the jetty below.

In October, 1942 we received our first Red Cross supplies. We were each given two comfort parcels and, over a period of about six months there was a monthly issue of tinned meat, sugar, cocoa, tea and dried fruit. Unfortunately we had no containers in which to hold the extra rations, so it was a case of an immediate feast, followed by a famine, until the following month. In addition to the food, we were given sleeveless cardigans of woollen material, which were easily altered into windbreakers and slacks. These cardigans proved to be a blessing for, when war broke out in the sunny days of December, many people had left their homes with little warm clothing, not thinking that they would never return. Although the Hong Kong winter is not severe, it can feel extremely cold especially when the diet is poor and living conditions allow of no comforts.

The privations in camp brought out the worst in some people, as undoubtedly the better side of their nature emerged from others. Early on, members of our police force had found their way into one of the nearby godowns. They organized nocturnal raids on the stores. Instead of making the information available to the starving community, they hid their stolen goods in their own quarters and sold them piecemeal to the highest bidders at preposterous prices. Few had any scruple. Thieving was rife — a blanket was stolen from a sleeping infant



when its mother left it alone for a few minutes. One day I saw something glint in the sunlight. It was a gold Rolex watch. Three weeks slipped by before it was claimed. The owner said he never thought that anyone finding a gold watch would dream of returning it, so he had not even bothered to look at the notice boards!

Like many others, Bill Faid had often thought of growing vegetables to supplement our diet but, because of the thieving, he had decided that it would be a waste of effort. Bill felt hungry all the time, yet he was unable to swallow the rice. It was pathetic.

"Why don't we have a garden on the roof?" I asked him one day.

"You must be quite mad, Jean Gittins. Who ever heard of growing vegetables on malthoid roofing?"

"We could make a garden," I replied. "I've been thinking about it for days. Here is my plan:

"You will have to persuade Mr. Pegg to let us have some short lengths of angle iron so that we could make some steps to the roof. Once there we will build some beds against the alcoves for shelter. There's plenty of soil — good leaf mould — on the hillside. Our vegetables would be safe then, as the only approach would be from this flat."

By promising him a quarter share in the garden produce, we persuaded Mr. Pegg to get us the angle iron supports which were plugged into the wall to form steps leading to the roof. Bricks were collected at night and were piled two-high in front of the alcoves. Bill brought in bucket after bucket of soil and, before very long, we had a thriving garden with dwarf tomatoes, mint (for their vitamin A value), and shallots. Watering and a lack of tools presented problems of a minor nature but Bill, who was a Tynesider and had many friends among the Police, managed to get from them an old watering can and, with the bucket as well, we carried the water up to the roof in reasonable comfort. As far as tools were concerned, we improvised as we went along. My experience with the girl guides had taught me always to find some way out of a difficulty. Practical application to theory, combined with a long interest in gardening, had formulated the idea which Bill

Faid put into effect. The vegetables certainly made the rice much more palatable and Bill was able at least to satisfy his hunger to a limited extent. Above all the joy of achievement was worth many times more than the effort expended.

As the warmer weather came on we drifted into a listless routine. The Japanese opened Tweed Bay for swimming. This was a godsend for the children but it was a long walk to the beach and not many adults made the effort. Besides there were innumerable queues to attend. One day I had just returned from queueing for our midday meal when I found Bill Faid waiting for me with bad news. "Billy?" I enquired. This was ever uppermost in my mind, especially as it had recently been rumoured that dysentery had reached epidemic proportions in Shamshuipo Camp.

"Oh no! Nothing like that. Just bugs on your bed."

I knew that many people had them but I couldn't believe that I could be so afflicted. Yet I knew it must be true. Bill would not have said so otherwise. My heart sank.

"Come. I'll show you." Bill said gently.

My bed was a folding camp stretcher which, knowing of the need for one in camp, I had bought in "Cat Street" for a dollar. I had scrubbed it with a strong solution of lysol. Bill Faid now took the end support and showed it to me. I shall never forget the absolute horror and revulsion I experienced at the sight. It was not just a bug or two — they were there by the thousand, so full of blood and every human anaemic. I burst into tears. I felt so humiliated. As soon as lunch was over Bill said:

"Come on, Jean. Let's try to get rid of them."

We poured boiling water over the wooden framework and along the seams of the canvas. Then, standing an old kerosine tin over our hotplate, he boiled the folded camp stretcher, first one end and then the other. This settled our immediate problem but there would always loom the dread of their return — this was the prisoners' curse of curses.

In May, 1943, we had a wonderful surprise. It was suddenly announced that "as an act of grace" the Japanese authorities had agreed to repatriate the women and children, the sick and the aged. Relief had come at last! The excite-

ment was terrific. We were instructed to advise our own camp office immediately of our preferred travel companions and destination, so that lists could be drawn up.

Knowing that I would be going to Australia, Mr. Pegg asked if I would travel with his wife, Bobby, as she was to go to New Zealand. Naturally I agreed.

"I hope you will accept the advice of an old friend, Mrs. Gittins," Mr. Pegg said. He used to live in a house which overlooked ours on the Peak. "As soon as you reach Australia, you must tell people who you are — that is, who your Father is. I have just returned from a visit over there. I assure you that this would mean a lot to your acceptance in that country."

"I would prefer people to accept me for myself, Mr. Pegg."

"Knowing you, I was afraid you would say that. Never mind. If you won't tell them, I'd have to see that Bobby does."

It was as well that plans for our repatriation never materialized.

As the days went by our meagre rations dwindled. It was now obvious that Hong Kong was being very effectively blockaded. We had had meat but rarely for several months. Stocks of flour were low and could not be replaced. Colliers were not getting through from north China and Japan and, as a consequence, electricity was strictly rationed. Before long, the power supply gave out. We did not mind putting up with more restrictions and shortages because relief seemed so near at hand; but when the Canadians left in September and still there was not the slightest sign of our longed-for repatriation, we sank into a despair too deep for words.

Only a few days had passed since the departure of the Canadians when several of our senior civil servants were arrested. It was said that the Japanese had uncovered a plan for the mass escape of our police force. People huddled in groups whispering. The atmosphere was tense with fear and suspense.

"Jean", Bill Faidd said one day, "do you feel up to doing a little Chinese translation?"

"I've forgotten a good deal of the Chinese I once knew but,

if I had a dictionary, I think I could still manage. Why do you ask?"

"Mr. Shaftain of the CID was asking me. I suggested that he should speak to you himself."

Mr. Shaftain had contacts in the underground movement. It appeared that those arrested were in the gravest danger and it was essential that word should be sent to Chungking. He warned me of the danger of possible exposure but there were not many in camp who could write Chinese. It never even occurred to me to refuse his request for help. Messages were translated over the next few days and written in tiny Chinese characters on pieces of cigarette paper. These were sealed on the trays of match boxes for transmission to Chungking. But our efforts were, as was to be expected, of no avail. Some of the men were executed. Others were given long-term gaol sentences. The grimness of our situation was driven home in all its starkness and a gloom, darkened by anxiety and apprehension, settled over us all.

In January, 1944 the administration of the Camp was changed from civil to military and the next six months proved some of the hungriest for many of us. We were put on to Japanese army ration, which meant an additional four ounces of rice per day instead of flour and, in place of meat, we had an issue of four ounces of peanut oil and a dessertspoonful of sugar every ten days. The ration for an infant equalled that of a grown man. The military regime introduced one improvement. They organized communal gardens and issued extra rations to workers whom they considered in their employ. These included hospital personnel, kitchen workers and gardeners. Other workers drew their awards from the communal rations but no one begrudged them their extras. The garden produce certainly proved a welcome addition to the diet and, indeed, at many a meal we were entirely dependent upon it.

By this time we had expanded our own garden. On the hillside in front of our block we had under cultivation ten rows of sweet potatoes as well as a vegetable patch in which carrots, string beans, tomatoes, pumpkins and cucumbers thrived. Bill and I worked long hours but we could now look forward to a good crop of sweet potatoes for Christmas.

On 1st June, 1944 Professor Byrne died suddenly from a heart attack. This was a terrible shock for his wife, Ethel, as indeed it was for all of us. Three weeks later I was sent to hospital and placed in the chest ward: my weight had gone down to under 90 lbs and I had a persistent cough. All the work of the garden now fell on Bill Faid.

Then occurred one of those terrible tragedies. Bill Faid, who had been mending a leaking roof on a Sunday morning, 23rd July, 1944 slipped and fell to the ground below. When they brought him to the hospital he was found to have died from a fractured skull.

Sister Gordon, who had been matron at the University Relief Hospital, took me from the ward to see him. As I looked at his face, now in quiet repose, I thought of what his death would mean to us. In a place like Stanley, where morale was so essential, we could ill afford the loss of one who was so outstanding an example of courage and fortitude. The camp turned the warmth of its heartfelt sympathy on his widow. For my own part I knew I had lost the wisest of counsellors and the dearest of friends.

No one, unless he has suffered the exigencies of severe water restrictions, can fully appreciate the joys of an uninterrupted supply. Hong Kong has a permanent water problem but, during the Japanese occupation, her population had dwindled to a quarter of its normal, so that the problem did not arise. "They can herd us like cattle," we would say, "and feed us like swine but we shall always have water." How wrong we proved to be.

One day in September, 1944 the Japanese announced that, owing to the shortage of coal, water could not be pumped to the filter beds for distribution so that there would be water from the taps for four hours only one day in five. This was a stunning blow, worsened by the fact that we had no storage facilities. Two old wells were found and opened for domestic use and, added to all our other queues, there was now a most important water queue. Once again the police force supplied the labour to draw water from the wells. Sewerage was a major problem. The Japanese finally agreed to place a gate on the barbed wire fence so that, for an hour each morning,

we were allowed to fetch the sea water for the toilets. The only alternative would have been open latrines.

Our garden was my personal problem. From then on I made detailed notes, kept a diary and tabulated information of my activities — since our stay in camp was indefinite, I felt it incumbent on me to be prepared for future years. But how I prayed these days for rain. To saturate the garden on every fifth day, when the water was on, was beyond my physical capabilities: either I had assistance or the garden would have to go.

In the flat below was my old friend Captain Horner Smith, former master of the Yangtse river steamer *Sui Wo*. He had found it difficult to resign himself to camp conditions and spent his spare time reading a volume of "The Oxford Book of English Verse". With the concurrence of Jeanne and Ethel who, since her husband's death had joined our mess, I suggested to Captain Smith that he should assist me. We offered, in return for his services, a quarter share of our garden produce.

"Please let me help you without any reward. I would be so happy to."

It appeared that he had seen me struggle with the water and had wanted to help us but, being of a shy disposition, could not bring himself to make the approach. From then on he took all the heavy work off my shoulders. He didn't know much about gardening but his interest deepened with experience. He was untiring in his efforts to help us and was a pleasant companion besides. As he did not cook for himself, he let us have his oil ration and, in return, we gave him a share of the cooked vegetables from the garden.

During 1944 we received our second consignment from the Red Cross. This time each person was issued with three comfort parcels but there were no bulk supplies. The hospital received urgently needed drugs and vitamins which were immediately put to use: for twelve weeks we each had a quarter of a thiamin tablet for four days of the week and a vitamin capsule on two days. Unfortunately the improved conditions did not last. By January, 1945 the situation was again quite desperate.

The final relief from the Red Cross came in February,



2nd Settling Street 1st Station

		Source	Result
1st Row	13/9/44	Same bed	Excellent 7 13/14
2nd Row	14/9/44	Wall bed in garden	Full as d. 9th. 21 Plants bed mature 3/5
3rd Row	14/9/44	Wall bed in garden	1st bed, opposite 2nd 1/2 as d. 13/3 very good 13/3
4th Row	22/9/44	Roof	1st 6 plants 3/5 - 1000 Roof V.G. 5/9
5th Row	2/10/44	Small bed	1st 1/2 - 1/2 V.G. 1st 1/2 - 1/2 V.G.
6th Row	2/10/44	Small bed Same bed	1st 1/2 - 1/2 V.G. 1st 1/2 - 1/2 V.G.
7th Row	14/10/44	Roof	23/5 - Excellent
8th Row	14/10/44	Roof	" "
9th Row	30/10/44	Long side plan	4/6 V.G.
10th Row	26/11/44	4 to 5 ft	4/6 Excellent
11th Row	12/11/44	Roof	27/11/44 V.G. 2
12th Row	24/11/44	1st row	27/11/44 Excellent
13th Row	24/11/44	Roof + 2nd	27/11/44 2nd

Tabulated notes  
on sweet potato  
cultivation

Food parcels received  
in internment

7/12 -  
1 - Peanut Butter  
1 - Golden Syrup  
1 - Tomato  
1 - Mashed Potatoes  
1 - Cheese & Butter

2/10  
1 - 2nd  
1 - Beans  
2 - 1st Beans  
1 - 2nd Beans  
1 - 3rd Beans

10/10  
1 - Peanut Butter  
1 - Beans  
6 - Potatoes  
1 - 2nd Beans  
1 - 3rd Beans

28/10  
1 - Golden Syrup  
1 - Mashed Potatoes  
1 - Mashed Potatoes

20/11/44  
1 - 2nd Beans  
1 - 3rd Beans  
1 - 4th Beans  
1 - 5th Beans  
1 - 6th Beans  
1 - 7th Beans  
1 - 8th Beans  
1 - 9th Beans  
1 - 10th Beans  
1 - 11th Beans  
1 - 12th Beans  
1 - 13th Beans  
1 - 14th Beans  
1 - 15th Beans  
1 - 16th Beans  
1 - 17th Beans  
1 - 18th Beans  
1 - 19th Beans  
1 - 20th Beans  
1 - 21st Beans  
1 - 22nd Beans  
1 - 23rd Beans  
1 - 24th Beans  
1 - 25th Beans  
1 - 26th Beans  
1 - 27th Beans  
1 - 28th Beans  
1 - 29th Beans  
1 - 30th Beans  
1 - 31st Beans  
1 - 32nd Beans  
1 - 33rd Beans  
1 - 34th Beans  
1 - 35th Beans  
1 - 36th Beans  
1 - 37th Beans  
1 - 38th Beans  
1 - 39th Beans  
1 - 40th Beans  
1 - 41st Beans  
1 - 42nd Beans  
1 - 43rd Beans  
1 - 44th Beans  
1 - 45th Beans  
1 - 46th Beans  
1 - 47th Beans  
1 - 48th Beans  
1 - 49th Beans  
1 - 50th Beans  
1 - 51st Beans  
1 - 52nd Beans  
1 - 53rd Beans  
1 - 54th Beans  
1 - 55th Beans  
1 - 56th Beans  
1 - 57th Beans  
1 - 58th Beans  
1 - 59th Beans  
1 - 60th Beans  
1 - 61st Beans  
1 - 62nd Beans  
1 - 63rd Beans  
1 - 64th Beans  
1 - 65th Beans  
1 - 66th Beans  
1 - 67th Beans  
1 - 68th Beans  
1 - 69th Beans  
1 - 70th Beans  
1 - 71st Beans  
1 - 72nd Beans  
1 - 73rd Beans  
1 - 74th Beans  
1 - 75th Beans  
1 - 76th Beans  
1 - 77th Beans  
1 - 78th Beans  
1 - 79th Beans  
1 - 80th Beans  
1 - 81st Beans  
1 - 82nd Beans  
1 - 83rd Beans  
1 - 84th Beans  
1 - 85th Beans  
1 - 86th Beans  
1 - 87th Beans  
1 - 88th Beans  
1 - 89th Beans  
1 - 90th Beans  
1 - 91st Beans  
1 - 92nd Beans  
1 - 93rd Beans  
1 - 94th Beans  
1 - 95th Beans  
1 - 96th Beans  
1 - 97th Beans  
1 - 98th Beans  
1 - 99th Beans  
1 - 100th Beans

3/12 (An. 1st. 1st. 2nd. 3rd. 4th. 5th. 6th. 7th. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th. 12th. 13th. 14th. 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. 19th. 20th. 21st. 22nd. 23rd. 24th. 25th. 26th. 27th. 28th. 29th. 30th. 31st. 32nd. 33rd. 34th. 35th. 36th. 37th. 38th. 39th. 40th. 41st. 42nd. 43rd. 44th. 45th. 46th. 47th. 48th. 49th. 50th. 51st. 52nd. 53rd. 54th. 55th. 56th. 57th. 58th. 59th. 60th. 61st. 62nd. 63rd. 64th. 65th. 66th. 67th. 68th. 69th. 70th. 71st. 72nd. 73rd. 74th. 75th. 76th. 77th. 78th. 79th. 80th. 81st. 82nd. 83rd. 84th. 85th. 86th. 87th. 88th. 89th. 90th. 91st. 92nd. 93rd. 94th. 95th. 96th. 97th. 98th. 99th. 100th. 101st. 102nd. 103rd. 104th. 105th. 106th. 107th. 108th. 109th. 110th. 111th. 112th. 113th. 114th. 115th. 116th. 117th. 118th. 119th. 120th. 121st. 122nd. 123rd. 124th. 125th. 126th. 127th. 128th. 129th. 130th. 131st. 132nd. 133rd. 134th. 135th. 136th. 137th. 138th. 139th. 140th. 141st. 142nd. 143rd. 144th. 145th. 146th. 147th. 148th. 149th. 150th. 151st. 152nd. 153rd. 154th. 155th. 156th. 157th. 158th. 159th. 160th. 161st. 162nd. 163rd. 164th. 165th. 166th. 167th. 168th. 169th. 170th. 171st. 172nd. 173rd. 174th. 175th. 176th. 177th. 178th. 179th. 180th. 181st. 182nd. 183rd. 184th. 185th. 186th. 187th. 188th. 189th. 190th. 191st. 192nd. 193rd. 194th. 195th. 196th. 197th. 198th. 199th. 200th. 201st. 202nd. 203rd. 204th. 205th. 206th. 207th. 208th. 209th. 210th. 211st. 212nd. 213rd. 214th. 215th. 216th. 217th. 218th. 219th. 220th. 221st. 222nd. 223rd. 224th. 225th. 226th. 227th. 228th. 229th. 230th. 231st. 232nd. 233rd. 234th. 235th. 236th. 237th. 238th. 239th. 240th. 241st. 242nd. 243rd. 244th. 245th. 246th. 247th. 248th. 249th. 250th. 251st. 252nd. 253rd. 254th. 255th. 256th. 257th. 258th. 259th. 260th. 261st. 262nd. 263rd. 264th. 265th. 266th. 267th. 268th. 269th. 270th. 271st. 272nd. 273rd. 274th. 275th. 276th. 277th. 278th. 279th. 280th. 281st. 282nd. 283rd. 284th. 285th. 286th. 287th. 288th. 289th. 290th. 291st. 292nd. 293rd. 294th. 295th. 296th. 297th. 298th. 299th. 300th. 301st. 302nd. 303rd. 304th. 305th. 306th. 307th. 308th. 309th. 310th. 311st. 312nd. 313rd. 314th. 315th. 316th. 317th. 318th. 319th. 320th. 321st. 322nd. 323rd. 324th. 325th. 326th. 327th. 328th. 329th. 330th. 331st. 332nd. 333rd. 334th. 335th. 336th. 337th. 338th. 339th. 340th. 341st. 342nd. 343rd. 344th. 345th. 346th. 347th. 348th. 349th. 350th. 351st. 352nd. 353rd. 354th. 355th. 356th. 357th. 358th. 359th. 360th. 361st. 362nd. 363rd. 364th. 365th. 366th. 367th. 368th. 369th. 370th. 371st. 372nd. 373rd. 374th. 375th. 376th. 377th. 378th. 379th. 380th. 381st. 382nd. 383rd. 384th. 385th. 386th. 387th. 388th. 389th. 390th. 391st. 392nd. 393rd. 394th. 395th. 396th. 397th. 398th. 399th. 400th. 401st. 402nd. 403rd. 404th. 405th. 406th. 407th. 408th. 409th. 410th. 411st. 412nd. 413rd. 414th. 415th. 416th. 417th. 418th. 419th. 420th. 421st. 422nd. 423rd. 424th. 425th. 426th. 427th. 428th. 429th. 430th. 431st. 432nd. 433rd. 434th. 435th. 436th. 437th. 438th. 439th. 440th. 441st. 442nd. 443rd. 444th. 445th. 446th. 447th. 448th. 449th. 450th. 451st. 452nd. 453rd. 454th. 455th. 456th. 457th. 458th. 459th. 460th. 461st. 462nd. 463rd. 464th. 465th. 466th. 467th. 468th. 469th. 470th. 471st. 472nd. 473rd. 474th. 475th. 476th. 477th. 478th. 479th. 480th. 481st. 482nd. 483rd. 484th. 485th. 486th. 487th. 488th. 489th. 490th. 491st. 492nd. 493rd. 494th. 495th. 496th. 497th. 498th. 499th. 500th. 501st. 502nd. 503rd. 504th. 505th. 506th. 507th. 508th. 509th. 510th. 511st. 512nd. 513rd. 514th. 515th. 516th. 517th. 518th. 519th. 520th. 521st. 522nd. 523rd. 524th. 525th. 526th. 527th. 528th. 529th. 530th. 531st. 532nd. 533rd. 534th. 535th. 536th. 537th. 538th. 539th. 540th. 541st. 542nd. 543rd. 544th. 545th. 546th. 547th. 548th. 549th. 550th. 551st. 552nd. 553rd. 554th. 555th. 556th. 557th. 558th. 559th. 560th. 561st. 562nd. 563rd. 564th. 565th. 566th. 567th. 568th. 569th. 570th. 571st. 572nd. 573rd. 574th. 575th. 576th. 577th. 578th. 579th. 580th. 581st. 582nd. 583rd. 584th. 585th. 586th. 587th. 588th. 589th. 590th. 591st. 592nd. 593rd. 594th. 595th. 596th. 597th. 598th. 599th. 600th. 601st. 602nd. 603rd. 604th. 605th. 606th. 607th. 608th. 609th. 610th. 611st. 612nd. 613rd. 614th. 615th. 616th. 617th. 618th. 619th. 620th. 621st. 622nd. 623rd. 624th. 625th. 626th. 627th. 628th. 629th. 630th. 631st. 632nd. 633rd. 634th. 635th. 636th. 637th. 638th. 639th. 640th. 641st. 642nd. 643rd. 644th. 645th. 646th. 647th. 648th. 649th. 650th. 651st. 652nd. 653rd. 654th. 655th. 656th. 657th. 658th. 659th. 660th. 661st. 662nd. 663rd. 664th. 665th. 666th. 667th. 668th. 669th. 670th. 671st. 672nd. 673rd. 674th. 675th. 676th. 677th. 678th. 679th. 680th. 681st. 682nd. 683rd. 684th. 685th. 686th. 687th. 688th. 689th. 690th. 691st. 692nd. 693rd. 694th. 695th. 696th. 697th. 698th. 699th. 700th. 701st. 702nd. 703rd. 704th. 705th. 706th. 707th. 708th. 709th. 710th. 711st. 712nd. 713rd. 714th. 715th. 716th. 717th. 718th. 719th. 720th. 721st. 722nd. 723rd. 724th. 725th. 726th. 727th. 728th. 729th. 730th. 731st. 732nd. 733rd. 734th. 735th. 736th. 737th. 738th. 739th. 740th. 741st. 742nd. 743rd. 744th. 745th. 746th. 747th. 748th. 749th. 750th. 751st. 752nd. 753rd. 754th. 755th. 756th. 757th. 758th. 759th. 760th. 761st. 762nd. 763rd. 764th. 765th. 766th. 767th. 768th. 769th. 770th. 771st. 772nd. 773rd. 774th. 775th. 776th. 777th. 778th. 779th. 780th. 781st. 782nd. 783rd. 784th. 785th. 786th. 787th. 788th. 789th. 790th. 791st. 792nd. 793rd. 794th. 795th. 796th. 797th. 798th. 799th. 800th. 801st. 802nd. 803rd. 804th. 805th. 806th. 807th. 808th. 809th. 810th. 811st. 812nd. 813rd. 814th. 815th. 816th. 817th. 818th. 819th. 820th. 821st. 822nd. 823rd. 824th. 825th. 826th. 827th. 828th. 829th. 830th. 831st. 832nd. 833rd. 834th. 835th. 836th. 837th. 838th. 839th. 840th. 841st. 842nd. 843rd. 844th. 845th. 846th. 847th. 848th. 849th. 850th. 851st. 852nd. 853rd. 854th. 855th. 856th. 857th. 858th. 859th. 860th. 861st. 862nd. 863rd. 864th. 865th. 866th. 867th. 868th. 869th. 870th. 871st. 872nd. 873rd. 874th. 875th. 876th. 877th. 878th. 879th. 880th. 881st. 882nd. 883rd. 884th. 885th. 886th. 887th. 888th. 889th. 890th. 891st. 892nd. 893rd. 894th. 895th. 896th. 897th. 898th. 899th. 900th. 901st. 902nd. 903rd. 904th. 905th. 906th. 907th. 908th. 909th. 910th. 911st. 912nd. 913rd. 914th. 915th. 916th. 917th. 918th. 919th. 920th. 921st. 922nd. 923rd. 924th. 925th. 926th. 927th. 928th. 929th. 930th. 931st. 932nd. 933rd. 934th. 935th. 936th. 937th. 938th. 939th. 940th. 941st. 942nd. 943rd. 944th. 945th. 946th. 947th. 948th. 949th. 950th. 951st. 952nd. 953rd. 954th. 955th. 956th. 957th. 958th. 959th. 960th. 961st. 962nd. 963rd. 964th. 965th. 966th. 967th. 968th. 969th. 970th. 971st. 972nd. 973rd. 974th. 975th. 976th. 977th. 978th. 979th. 980th. 981st. 982nd. 983rd. 984th. 985th. 986th. 987th. 988th. 989th. 990th. 991st. 992nd. 993rd. 994th. 995th. 996th. 997th. 998th. 999th. 1000th. 1001st. 1002nd. 1003rd. 1004th. 1005th. 1006th. 1007th. 1008th. 1009th. 1010th. 1011st. 1012nd. 1013rd. 1014th. 1015th. 1016th. 1017th. 1018th. 1019th. 1020th. 1021st. 1022nd. 1023rd. 1024th. 1025th. 1026th. 1027th. 1028th. 1029th. 1030th. 1031st. 1032nd. 1033rd. 1034th. 1035th. 1036th. 1037th. 1038th. 1039th. 1040th. 1041st. 1042nd. 1043rd. 1044th. 1045th. 1046th. 1047th. 1048th. 1049th. 1050th. 1051st. 1052nd. 1053rd. 1054th. 1055th. 1056th. 1057th. 1058th. 1059th. 1060th. 1061st. 1062nd. 1063rd. 1064th. 1065th. 1066th. 1067th. 1068th. 1069th. 1070th. 1071st. 1072nd. 1073rd. 1074th. 1075th. 1076th. 1077th. 1078th. 1079th. 1080th. 1081st. 1082nd. 1083rd. 1084th. 1085th. 1086th. 1087th. 1088th. 1089th. 1090th. 1091st. 1092nd. 1093rd. 1094th. 1095th. 1096th. 1097th. 1098th. 1099th. 1100th. 1101st. 1102nd. 1103rd. 1104th. 1105th. 1106th. 1107th. 1108th. 1109th. 1110th. 1111st. 1112nd. 1113rd. 1114th. 1115th. 1116th. 1117th. 1118th. 1119th. 1120th. 1121st. 1122nd. 1123rd. 1124th. 1125th. 1126th. 1127th. 1128th. 1129th. 1130th. 1131st. 1132nd. 1133rd. 1134th. 1135th. 1136th. 1137th. 1138th. 1139th. 1140th. 1141st. 1142nd. 1143rd. 1144th. 1145th. 1146th. 1147th. 1148th. 1149th. 1150th. 1151st. 1152nd. 1153rd. 1154th. 1155th. 1156th. 1157th. 1158th. 1159th. 1160th. 1161st. 1162nd. 1163rd. 1164th. 1165th. 1166th. 1167th. 1168th. 1169th. 1170th. 1171st. 1172nd. 1173rd. 1174th. 1175th. 1176th. 1177th. 1178th. 1179th. 1180th. 1181st. 1182nd. 1183rd. 1184th. 1185th. 1186th. 1187th. 1188th. 1189th. 1190th. 1191st. 1192nd. 1193rd. 1194th. 1195th. 1196th. 1197th. 1198th. 1199th. 1200th. 1201st. 1202nd. 1203rd. 1204th. 1205th. 1206th. 1207th. 1208th. 1209th. 1210th. 1211st. 1212nd. 1213rd. 1214th. 1215th. 1216th. 1217th. 1218th. 1219th. 1220th. 1221st. 1222nd. 1223rd. 1224th. 1225th. 1226th. 1227th. 1228th. 1229th. 1230th. 1231st. 1232nd. 1233rd. 1234th. 1235th. 1236th. 1237th. 1238th. 1239th. 1240th. 1241st. 1242nd. 1243rd. 1244th. 1245th. 1246th. 1247th. 1248th. 1249th. 1250th. 1251st. 1252nd. 1253rd. 1254th. 1255th. 1256th. 1257th. 1258th. 1259th. 1260th. 1261st. 1262nd. 1263rd. 1264th. 1265th. 1266th. 1267th. 1268th. 1269th. 1270th. 1271st. 1272nd. 1273rd. 1274th. 1275th. 1276th. 1277th. 1278th. 1279th. 1280th. 1281st. 1282nd. 1283rd. 1284th. 1285th. 1286th. 1287th. 1288th. 1289th. 1290th. 1291st. 1292nd. 1293rd. 1294th. 1295th. 1296th. 1297th. 1298th. 1299th. 1300th. 1301st. 1302nd. 1303rd. 1304th. 1305th. 1306th. 1307th. 1308th. 1309th. 1310th. 1311st. 1312nd. 1313rd. 1314th. 1315th. 1316th. 1317th. 1318th. 1319th. 1320th. 1321st. 1322nd. 1323rd. 1324th. 1325th. 1326th. 1327th. 1328th. 1329th. 1330th. 1331st. 1332nd. 1333rd. 1334th. 1335th. 1336th. 1337th. 1338th. 1339th. 1340th. 1341st. 1342nd. 1343rd. 1344th. 1345th. 1346th. 1347th. 1348th. 1349th. 1350th. 1351st. 1352nd. 1353rd. 1354th. 1355th. 1356th. 1357th. 1358th. 1359th. 1360th. 1361st. 1362nd. 1363rd. 1364th. 1365th. 1366th. 1367th. 1368th. 1369th. 1370th. 1371st. 1372nd. 1373rd. 1374th. 1375th. 1376th. 1377th. 1378th. 1379th. 1380th. 1381st. 1382nd. 1383rd. 1384th. 1385th. 1386th. 1387th. 1388th. 1389th. 1390th. 1391st. 1392nd. 1393rd. 1394th. 1395th. 1396th. 1397th. 1398th. 1399th. 1400th. 1401st. 1402nd. 1403rd. 1404th. 1405th. 1406th. 1407th. 1408th. 1409th. 1410th. 1411st. 1412nd. 1413rd. 1414th. 1415th. 1416th. 1417th. 1418th. 1419th. 1420th. 1421st. 1422nd. 1423rd. 1424th. 1425th. 1426th. 1427th. 1428th. 1429th. 1430th. 1431st. 1432nd. 1433rd. 1434th. 1435th. 1436th. 1437th. 1438th. 1439th. 1440th. 1441st. 1442nd. 1443rd. 1444th. 1445th. 1446th. 1447th. 1448th. 1449th. 1450th. 1451st. 1452nd. 1453rd. 1454th. 1455th. 1456th. 1457th. 1458th. 1459th. 1460th. 1461st. 1462nd. 1463rd. 1464th. 1465th. 1466th. 1467th. 1468th. 1469th. 1470th. 1471st. 1472nd. 1473rd. 1474th. 1475th. 1476th. 1477th. 1478th. 1479th. 1480th. 1481st. 1482nd. 1483rd. 1484th. 1485th. 1486th. 1487th. 1488th. 1489th. 1490th. 1491st. 1492nd. 1493rd. 1494th. 1495th. 1496th. 1497th. 1498th. 1499th. 1500th. 1501st. 1502nd. 1503rd. 1504th. 1505th. 1506th. 1507th. 1508th. 1509th. 1510th. 1511st. 1512nd. 1513rd. 1514th. 1515th. 1516th. 1517th. 1518th. 1519th. 1520th. 1521st. 1522nd. 1523rd. 1524th. 1525th. 1526th. 1527th. 1528th. 1529th. 1530th. 1531st. 1532nd. 1533rd. 1534th. 1535th. 1536th. 1537th. 1538th. 1539th. 1540th. 1541st. 1542nd. 1543rd. 1544th. 1545th. 1546th. 1547th. 1548th. 1549th. 1550th. 1551st. 1552nd. 1553rd. 1554th. 1555th. 1556th. 1557th. 1558th. 1559th. 1560th. 1561st. 1562nd. 1563rd. 1564th. 1565th. 1566th. 1567th. 1568th. 1569th. 1570th. 1571st. 1572nd. 1573rd. 1574th. 1575th. 1576th. 1577th. 1578th. 1579th. 1580th. 1581st. 1582nd. 1583rd. 1584th. 1585th. 1586th. 1587th. 1588th. 1589th. 1590th. 1591st. 1592nd. 1593rd. 1594th. 1595th. 1596th. 1597th. 1598th. 1599th. 1600th. 1601st. 1602nd. 1603rd. 1604th. 1605th. 1606th. 1607th. 1608th. 1609th. 1610th. 1611st. 1612nd. 1613rd. 1614th. 1615



1945. General starvation had seemed imminent and almost everyone suffered in greater or less degree from those revolting twin deficiency diseases, beri-beri and pellagra. The issue, when it came, was a disappointment. Instead of parcels, rumoured to weigh thirty-three pounds, all we received was one comfort parcel each, left from 1942, four American cigarettes, and a small quantity of medical supplies. It was said that the fresh consignment from the Red Cross had been shipped to Japan.

It might well be wondered how we survived. The only explanation I have to offer is that the human body must be particularly adaptable: we became used to deficiencies in necessities and diet. The Hong Kong Branch of the International Red Cross sent us bran and beans, so highly valued for their vitamin B content, and such medical supplies, clothing and books as could be obtained. Chinese and neutral friends were permitted, at considerable risk to themselves, to send small food parcels — I was among the more fortunate to get one regularly from my family and for a long time I kept a record of the contents of each parcel. In this way some of the large firms were able to arrange, through their Chinese agents, for extras for their staff — to be paid for after the war. These extras made a tremendous difference to our dreary diet but the joy and excitement of receiving them meant even more to us than the food.

Although there were no epidemics of an alarming nature, the health of the camp was a disgrace to Japan. Over ninety per cent of the people suffered from some form of malnutrition: beri-beri and pellagra were the most common but central blindness, rickets and septic sores claimed their share of victims. Growing children perhaps suffered the most from privation. Billy's sister, Mabel, with her three youngsters between the ages of seven and eleven seemed never to be free from one or other complaint. At one time Michael, the eldest, was desperately ill. It was thought that his vision would suffer permanent damage.

Schooling for the children had been the concern of our educational authorities and from the earliest days, kindergarten, as well as primary and secondary, classes had been set up. The organizers worked against tremendous odds. There were no

classrooms, no desks, no books or other equipment. They had also to contend with the lack of energy and concentration due to poor diet. And yet, before the years were over, some of the youngsters had reached matriculation level and the standard achieved was subsequently recognized by the University of London.

For adults there were lectures in engineering, mathematics, economics, psychology, languages, history and English literature. There was a good collection of books for those who enjoyed reading; for the more serious minded, the Vice-Chancellor's library of classical literature and a recent edition of "Encyclopædia Britannica" were available for anybody's use. Mr. E. A. Pritchard, Commissioner of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who had lived many years in Peking, conducted classes in Mandarin. He wrote copious notes on the blackboard which the class copied as best they could with the limited means at their disposal. I was singularly fortunate in having with me a small supply of lined foolscap paper. These written sheets — Chinese characters and phrases copied from the blackboard, with phonetic sounds in English and explanatory notes in shorthand — are among my most prized souvenirs of the camp.

The fuel shortage which had given rise to the cut in our water supply had also made necessary the most stringent restrictions in electricity. It was not long before the power supply was completely cut off, making the winter of 1944 the coldest and darkest many of us had ever experienced. We were not permitted to congregate in numbers larger than ten, but small discussion groups were held in our rooms in the evenings. Sometimes — by special permission — concerts, plays, and even ballets were staged. In this way morale and intellectual interests were maintained and even stimulated.

The Japanese were anxious that we should have a taste of their propaganda and, until the fall of Germany, provided us with copies of their English language newspaper, *Hong Kong News*. We read with interest the conduct of their drive for co-prosperity in Asia; their frequent claims that the American Navy had been totally destroyed. We were told of the imminent occupation of Australia by His Imperial Nipponese Majesty's Expeditionary Forces, that the Allies could never effect a land-

ing on the continent of Europe, and that Russia was disgruntled and dissatisfied with allied aid. We learnt to sift fact from fiction and, although ever impatient and chronically sick with hope deferred for liberation, we were never in doubt as regards the final outcome of the war.

The deliberate cruelty on the part of the Japanese authorities in denying communication between camp and camp, and between camp and outside world was one of the worst features of our life. Most of it was absolutely unnecessary. Letters arrived and were not distributed: in the three and a half years I heard only twice from Billy and once from Elizabeth. Cards were written — we were allowed to send one each month — and were never despatched. Even though the prisoners-of-war were not more than ten miles from Stanley, they were never allowed a single opportunity to visit. In order to let us know that they were still alive, the men used to send their wives one military yen\* every month. These would come *en bloc* to the communal office, from where the money would be distributed. Should the remittance suddenly cease, as Billy's did in December, 1943, one was left in doubt as to the cause. The uncertainty was tormenting, but one could at least grasp at the hope that they could still be alive. Six months later I received his second letter, sent from Japan. It was only then that I knew he had been drafted there.

And so for over thirteen hundred days we led a vague, perplexing, debilitated day to day existence, not knowing what the morrow would bring or when this existence would end. We often said: "If only we knew . . . ." I now realize how merciful it was that we were in ignorance. Although we have found after our release that our hardships were lighter than those suffered by many others in the Far East yet, in their endurance, we needed all the fortitude we possessed. To have to live, day after day indefinitely, sharing with others one small cubicle that served as your bedroom, dining room, study and lounge; meeting and never being able to get away from the same people; eating, seated on your bed, out of rusty tins

---

\* Valueless paper currency introduced by Japanese authorities during the Occupation.

the hateful mess they called "food"; talking by day and dreaming at night of pleasures you were going to enjoy; and, frantic with worry from a lack of family news. There was nowhere you could find a little privacy — be alone to have a good howl.

Strange to say the days didn't seem to drag. Looking after the bare necessities of life is, in such an environment, a whole time job. Gardening presented the most attractive occupation. It meant hard work and careful planning but the reward was more than worthwhile. I can still recall the trepidation with which I transplanted my first seedlings, the thrill as I watched their growth, the heartbreak when vermin and disease attacked them and, finally, the pride and joy of the first fruits. "But where did you get your seeds?" I am sometimes asked. The first tomato seeds were saved from ration tomatoes. As for carrots, I received a bunch, with their tops on, in a parcel from town. We cut the tops and planted them: we had carrots every season after that. With care and ingenuity, patience and perseverance, gardening without tools was yet a pleasure. Our friends were grateful for what little we were able to spare them. I was indebted to the garden for many hours of peace and happiness.

We spent much time picking out weevils from our food, grinding rice, gathering bits of fuel, rolling cigarettes out of ends mixed with dried leaves, fighting cockroaches and, most humiliating of all, debugging our beds. We were just human machines — mechanical, apathetic, resigned. Nothing required a great deal of intelligence but everything was an effort. What will we do if the roof leaks again? How can we make the rice go further? Or, can we spare a little peanut oil for the lamp tonight? Those were the most perplexing problems of our day. Therefore, though our memories became poor and we could not concentrate, it was not difficult just to drift on. But you saw too much of everybody and tempers grew short. Lifelong friendships might be broken, yet friends were not permitted to part so, instead of passing a cheery greeting at the approach of someone you knew, you acquired the habit of looking the other way. I am firmly of the opinion that it was the natural beauty of the neighbouring hills and sea and sky that saved many from insanity — that and the fact that we

could laugh at ourselves. When the sight of your companions drove you to distraction, there was always comfort and often intense joy in even a moment's contemplation of nature; when the company became tense and strained, someone would see the funny side of things and the situation would be eased.

Ever since the fall of Germany the camp had been filled with such wild rumours that no one dared believe in anything that was said. From the behaviour of the Japanese, though, we had guessed that the end could not be far away. They were at first inclined to deal with us even more harshly but this was soon followed by a relaxation of impositions — they even sent meat in our rations after a lapse of some eighteen months. When the end came it was different from anything we had imagined. There was no official statement of any kind but the wonderful news, trickling in from an uncertain source on the evening of 15th August, 1945 had suddenly, like the proverbial wildfire, darted rather than been carried throughout the camp.

There followed days of suspense and uncertainty. Then friends began to flock in from town, bringing with them goodwill, greetings and food. How happy we were to see them! Vic and "M. K." were among the first to arrive. I can still recall their faces, worn and drawn, as they stood waiting patiently on the other side of the barrier which our own police had erected. For once in my life I flung discretion to the winds and broke through the barrier, and we were in one another's arms. Each day the bus which brought visitors into Stanley took a load of internees, who might have urgent business, out to town. Young Hohlov, unable to get on a bus and too impatient to wait, walked the twenty miles from and to the city to see us. There were daily visits from our prisoners-of-war from across the harbour but the joy of liberation and reunion was restrained — some were too ill even to make the short journey, many had been drafted to Japan, and others had died of starvation or disease. I asked why Billy had been drafted. His friends told me that the Japanese had looked for technically trained people and Billy, being an engineer, and fit, had been selected. He could have sought exemption, they said, because he was no longer a young man but he had refused to claim, what he considered, to be an unfair privilege.

Knowing Billy as I did, I was not surprised at his attitude although, had he not gone to Japan, he might have been alive today.

On 29th August, 1945 British planes flew overhead, dropping food and medical supplies. The Royal Navy had arrived! On the following afternoon the Rear-Admiral himself was driven into Stanley in a jeep—it was the first time we had seen such a vehicle. In a brief but impressive ceremony flags of all the allied nations were raised. The Union Jack once again fluttered in the breeze. Up at headquarters, the White Ensign replaced the Japanese flag.

Our government officials soon left to help in the work of taking over the chaotic and neglected city. The Colonial Secretary was once more the King's representative, and our Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Sloss, had been reinstated as Censor-in-Chief. He had taken his secretary, May Witchell, with him and now he sent for me. On Monday, 3rd September, 1945 I left Stanley by bus, in the company of about twenty others. It was a lovely morning and we felt privileged to have been asked to assist in this initial rehabilitation. We wondered how, after years of internment, we would settle down to normal routine?

Was it possible we were free at last? In a daze I walked into the Gloucester Hotel which had been set aside for the purpose of housing members of the essential services. After the sordidness of camp accommodation, the comforts of the large bedroom seemed unreal. Armchairs and spring mattresses, a private bathroom—were these incredible luxuries really for us?

To adjust one's digestive tract from a diet of spinach and rice to one of bread, milk and tinned meat was not easy. Hunger was a thing of the past. I partook of food only because I felt I had to—it was a means to an end. Added to this was a natural mental strain. Sleep was a problem: the brain, accustomed to doing no work at all, remained over-active at night; mosquitoes, owing to Japanese neglect of the town's drainage, were plentiful, and the sounds of a city, albeit one just faintly stirring from death, were more than enough to shatter sleep.

But it was wonderful to be working again. Mr. Sloss held several press conferences and gave details of Government's programme. One of the more pressing problems was stabilization of the currency: the Hong Kong dollar had to be re-introduced swiftly, in place of the worthless Japanese military yen. But when? And at what rate? The strictest secrecy was enforced. On the appointed day, press representatives were locked in as the news was released and, overnight, the military yen was declared illegal and the Hong Kong dollar, at its pre-war level was reinstated.

One day a young Royal Naval rating walked into our office. He placed his arms around me, kissing me on both cheeks!

"Don't you know me, Auntie Jean?"

It was Billy's nephew, John Fisher. He told me he had joined the Royal Navy on leaving school in England, requesting service in the Far East. He had been sent out with the relieving forces, first to Sydney where he had seen his mother and she had failed to recognize him. It was not surprising therefore that I, not having seen him for over ten years, did not know who he was. It was a nice thought on his part to join the Navy, in the hope that he would be sent to the Far East. Strangely enough, his hope had been fulfilled.

Our days were full and very hectic. So much was happening that plans had to be changed frequently to suit altered circumstances. Knowing that the children were in good hands, it had been my intention to await news of Billy before leaving Hong Kong to join them. Odd rumours were trickling in from Japan but there was nothing specific. The war had ended too suddenly for any organized action to be taken by the allied occupation forces in regard to the evacuation of prisoners-of-war. Moreover the inaccurate and incomplete records from the prison camps had made it impossible even for lists of survivors to be compiled. In Hong Kong speculation was wild. Some said that POWs would be sent to Manila, others thought it might be Australia, still others were certain that England would be their destination. It was confusing and extremely frustrating, especially when one longed so desperately for the news which never came.

Although I was already working, a certificate of fitness was required before I could stay. Because of my previous chest history, the health authorities refused even to examine me. I was sent instead to Volunteer Headquarters, where the adjutant was to arrange for my transfer to Australia by naval transport. I was bitterly disappointed.

Understanding my feelings Mr. Sloss suggested that I should leave several letters with the adjutant for despatch to the various centres so that wherever Billy might be sent, there would be a letter from me. My disappointment was further assuaged by the arrival from China of Gordon King and, joy of all joys, he brought news and recent photographs of Elizabeth and John. How they had grown and how happy they appeared to be! A cable arrived from Elizabeth: now that the war was over, she said, they were longing to come home. Nothing could have touched me more deeply than that they should wish to come home. The maturity of thought and expression contained in the cable gave me some insight into her development over the years and I looked forward with keen anticipation to meeting this young woman we had known only as a child. Reluctantly I bid *au revoir* to Vic and to Florence — Father had not returned from Macao and the rest of the family were scattered in China. Our meeting had been brief but we found comfort in the thought that this parting would be short. God be willing, Billy and I would soon be bringing the children home to Hong Kong.

HMS *Vindex* was a small aircraft carrier, converted for service with the Royal Navy from a merchant ship. She was alongside the naval dockyard. Mr. Sloss saw me safely on board and handed me over to Horner Smith who, by a stroke of good fortune, was a fellow passenger. We called the next morning for the internees from Stanley and sailed for Sydney on 18th September, 1945.

It was a joy to be on, instead of just looking at the sea again. The Captain, Commander J. D. L. Williams, and officers of HMS *Vindex* were exceptionally kind. At first, the radio and cinema, cigarettes, five pounds of real money, and association with the outside world were strangely disconcerting; but kindly consideration, simple comforts, sea air and good



*Notes taken at a Mandarin Chinese class*

①. -  $\text{H} = \text{hydrogen}$   
with, in company  
with and connect  
our to use here.

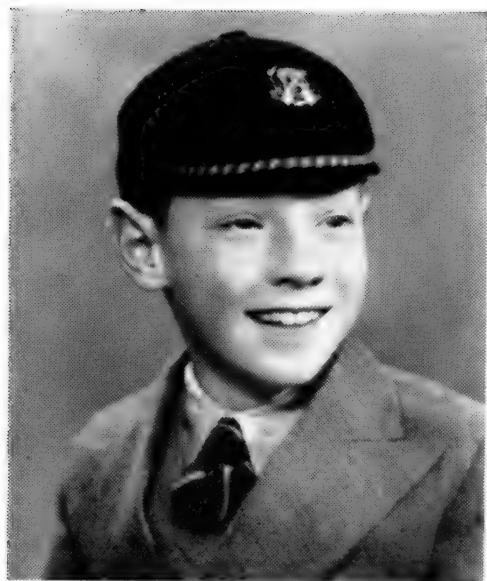
What is the  $\frac{2}{3}$  do you  
mean of

Peckham.  
No

Teacher's  
comments

One of the  
cigarette packages

*Elizabeth*



*John*

*at the end of the war.*

food soon helped recondition our bodies and our minds. At a Royal Air Force base on Manus Island I experienced the thrill of a flight on an aeroplane — I had never flown before. It was only a small, home-made aircraft which the RAF, when taking over the base, had acquired from the Americans for a case of whisky, but I enjoyed every minute of the short ride.

All too soon the voyage was over. In just a fortnight we had entered the Heads and were sailing towards Sydney to the sound of cheers and sirens from all around. "Toot-toot-toot-toot. Welcome to Australia!" They all seemed to say. It was a glorious day — the blue sky forming a perfect background for the green foliage and red roofs of Sydney's suburban North Shore. From the flight deck of the carrier we had a panoramic view of Sydney's Harbour and Bridge — a truly magnificent sight. What Sydneysider does not boast, and rightly too, of "Our Bridge" or "Our 'arbour"? Yet we entered with the trepidation and hesitation of unready strangers; we were hardly equipped to face a new life. Who could hazard a guess as to what the future held for us, or how we would stand up to the test of time?



*Book Three:* ELIZABETH AND JOHN

1. Sorrow Awaits Me .....	161
2. I Meet New Friends .....	166
3. Life Begins Afresh .....	173
4. Hong Kong — 1946 .....	188
5. Problems of the Postwar Years .....	199
6. Hong Kong — 1950 .....	212
7. I Begin to Take Root .....	225



## SORROW AWAITS ME

Summer was drawing to a close when we left Hong Kong in mid-September and it was a pleasant prospect that, at the end of a fortnight's travel to Australia, we would meet with yet another spring.

No welcome could have been warmer nor weather more kind than that which greeted us in Sydney on the afternoon of 2nd October, 1945. With the friendly sound of welcoming sirens, and the sea a sheet of sparkling sapphire, the city of Sydney, bathed in spring sunshine, seemed to beckon as HMS *Vindex* sailed sedately up the harbour to berth alongside a wharf at Pyrmont. A military band played for us while representatives of the Australian Red Cross Society and the Department of Social Services attended to the more mundane matters of our welfare. When formalities were over we turned to the joyous meeting of relatives and friends.

*Vindex* was to have gone on to Melbourne but, on arrival in Sydney, she had received orders to return immediately to Hong Kong. Hurriedly I had packed my few possessions. It was a great pity to have to break my journey but Billy's sister, Charlotte, was in Sydney and I knew that she would be there to greet me.

But Charlotte was nowhere to be seen. I was desperately anxious for news of Billy, and had hoped that a letter, or even a message, might have been awaiting me. Neither had arrived. Among the people who now flocked aboard were many of the wives who had spent the war years in Sydney. I noticed some of the men who, by their debilitated appearance, had obviously only recently emerged from the prison camps of Japan. No one had the slightest information concerning Billy, nor could anyone offer a single word of encouragement or comfort. As the minutes went by, my

anxiety grew apace and a deep apprehension welled up within me. I was consumed by the fear that this strange silence could only forebode bad news. Where was Charlotte? I never doubted that she would come but the suspense was almost more than I could bear.

A light tap on my shoulder and I turned to see the friendly, smiling face of Dorothy Jack. The teenager who, with her mother and sister, had brought Elizabeth and John to Australia in 1941, had grown into a self-assured young woman. I wondered about her father. He, like Billy, had been drafted to Japan.

"Dorothy! How very nice to see you. Who are you meeting?"

"Why, you, of course!" she replied. "Jean, I am so glad you are safe. Mummie is sorry she couldn't come along but she sends her love. She'll see you later."

"Thank you, Dorothy. This is most kind of you and your mother too. Dorothy, have you any news of Billy?"

"Sorry, no, Jean. Nothing at all."

"What about your father?" I was almost afraid to ask.

"Daddy died last September and Mummie and I have been waiting for Billy to come through so that we might all go back to Hong Kong to get the old firm going again."

Dorothy's news added to my foreboding. How brave she was. They had, of course, received their sad news months ago and had had the time to adjust themselves. She was full of plans for the future.

"I *am* sorry to hear about your father, Dorothy. Oh, look, there's Billy's sister, Charlotte. Please excuse me for a moment. I must go to her."

Charlotte, breathless and excited, explained that she had been given the wrong information and had gone to another pier. She now threw her arms around me and began to weep.

"Please don't cry, Charlotte," I begged, "I am beside myself with anxiety as it is and have been on the verge of tears all day. No one appears to have any news of Billy." A sudden thought struck me. "I don't suppose you would have heard from him? Some of those men have obviously arrived from Japan. Do you know if Billy is all right?"



"Billy is gone," Charlotte said simply. "He died last March."

"Oh, no, Charlotte. This can't be true. The Red Cross would surely have heard by now. I have just asked the officers over there and they had no information."

Charlotte sobbed and shook her head. "Teddy Fincher arrived from Japan on Sunday. He told me. Teddy was not in the same camp as Billy was, but he is as certain as if he had been with him. Teddy asked me to say how very sorry he was — he could not face up to meeting you today. Billy's will and other personal effects, he said, were with a Dr. Riley of the RAF."

When I heard this icy fingers gripped my heart. Teddy Fincher was a family friend of long standing and a thoroughly reliable person. Much as though I would have liked to have doubted the authenticity of his information, I had to admit that it must have been beyond question or Teddy would never have repeated it. Nevertheless, I found it unbelievable. There must be some mistake. Things like this happened to other people. It could not possibly happen to me.

But it did. And the world collapsed around me. The city which but a short while back had looked so full of hope and promise suddenly loomed bewilderingly large. The unfamiliar crowds and the noise of the traffic threatened to overpower and engulf me. In desperation I turned to the comfort of Charlotte's embrace.

She took me home to her flat at Rose Bay. We telephoned Melbourne to speak to the children but they were at boarding school and I had only a few words with their guardian. In any event the pleasure we might have shared from the contact would have been marred by the sad news I had to impart. It was perhaps as well that we did not speak. Charlotte put me to bed. I was too stunned to weep and too shocked for coherent speech. Thoughts of what the future might hold crowded in on me. I was overwhelmed and appalled.

I spent a sleepless night. At dawn I rose and sat by the open window. The sun was just rising and the pink-tinted sky gave promise of another perfect day. In my distraught state nothing mattered any more to me. Yet as I watched

with unappreciative eyes the sky's changing colour, the dewy freshness of the morning, sweetened with the faint perfume of roses from the garden, brought an unexpected quietude. I found myself able to think more clearly. Should I go on to Melbourne or, as Charlotte had suggested, stay with her for a while? She was deeply concerned about me and, the night before, I had been sorely tempted to lean on her for support. Now, in the tranquility of the morning, I realized that a postponement of my plan to go on to Melbourne could only mean a shelving of my many problems. No. The sooner I joined the children and accepted my new responsibilities, the sooner I would find my feet. There was no alternative.

But this was easier said than done. We found that interstate travel for civilians was suspended because all transport facilities had been requisitioned for the exclusive use of service personnel. Neither the Hong Kong Government representative nor the Red Cross officials could do anything to help me. I was forced to resign myself to an indefinite wait until transport became available.

The Red Cross had given me £25, and I had drawn my first allowance from the Hong Kong Government, so Charlotte and Mrs. Jack suggested that we went shopping. There was much that I needed and we bought what was essential but shopping held no appeal. The hours dragged by. This delay of my journey to Melbourne was frustrating in the extreme, and might have gone on for a fortnight or longer; but for the timely assistance of the Captain of HMS *Vindex*. On hearing of my difficulty, Commander Williams had moved swiftly to help me. The same evening he telephoned to say that he had succeeded in getting me a ticket, and had even made a reservation, on the interstate train leaving Sydney the following night! He had achieved what was believed by all to be an impossible feat. I was deeply moved by his sympathy and very grateful for his kindness.

The *Sydney Express* left Central Station punctually at 8 p.m. The train carried no sleepers but it was very comfortable and, thanks to the reservation, I had a corner seat from which I could look out on to a clear sky studded with myriads of

stars. I identified the brightly shining Sirius without difficulty and watched the constellations of Taurus and Orion rise on the eastern horizon and travel out of sight overhead just as Gemini came into view. We reached the Victorian border at seven in the morning and transferred to the wider gauged *Spirit of Progress*.

What a vast country. We passed mile upon mile of flat or gently undulating grazing land, bare except for sheep and the native gum tree. An odd homestead might be sighted in the distance but the view from the train had little variation yet, for some inexplicable reason, it did not seem monotonous. Country towns were few and far between. I found it restful just to sit back and half close my eyes. I must have dozed for, suddenly, I realized that the scene had changed from rural to suburban and, as punctually as we had left Sydney, we arrived in Melbourne on the scheduled time of 11.30 a.m.

The children were there with their guardian, Mr. Clucas, to meet the train. I would not have known them but they found me. They told me later that I had not changed. It was simply wonderful to be with them again after our long separation. I had lost over four years of their growth. Elizabeth at fifteen had the bearing and dignity of a young adult. Her former sallowness of complexion, so commonly seen in children brought up in the tropics, had been replaced by a slight tan, deepened by the faint flush of excitement, tinting her naturally cream coloured skin. Her dark hair had grown strong and wavy in Melbourne's climate and now framed a lovely face from which her light grey eyes shone bright and clear. John was almost ten years old and had grown beyond recognition. He had lost all trace of his old bronchial trouble and was well and quietly happy. He was obviously content now that he was with me again. I knew at once that I possessed a priceless treasure in the children: in spite of the heavy loss of husband and home, I was more than fortunate in having them. No matter what the future held, these two would never fail me. I would always find inspiration and comfort in their love.

## I MEET NEW FRIENDS

Having seen Hong Kong in its postwar condition, and knowing that the children were well established in their schools, I had no difficulty in making a decision to remain in Melbourne, at least until their secondary education was completed. I had never before been alone and the family in Hong Kong were naturally worried about me but they knew that I would have to do whatever I felt was for the best. For my own part I realized that my task would not be an easy one but, in the first burst of enthusiasm, there had seemed no alternative.

Australians must be the kindest and most generous hearted people in the world. Other than Elizabeth and John, I did not know a soul in Melbourne yet, from the moment of my arrival, I never lacked friends. After Mary King's departure, her associates had taken an even greater interest in my children. Now they opened their hearts to include me. I received many letters of condolence and of welcome, invitations, and flowers, among which was a particularly beautiful gift from Elizabeth's friends in Koorinya House, where she boarded in the Presbyterian Ladies' College.

John was a boarder at Carey Baptist Grammar School. He had spent a term, when he first came, at Mentone Grammar School but he was not well and Mary King had him living at home and attending a state school for a year. According to Elizabeth, John had progressed well in the state school, but he had learnt to speak "the Australian language" and, when he came home one day with a cut eye "Auntie" (Mrs. King) had decided that this was a little too rough for a timid young lad, and had sent him to Carey instead.

Both John and Elizabeth had been granted indefinite leave

of absence so that they could be with me. I was most anxious not to interrupt their studies and, having seen me, John seemed quite content to return to school. In the strangeness of my new surroundings, I was thankful to have Elizabeth near me for a few days.

Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Clucas, whose guardianship of the children Mrs. King had arranged before she left Melbourne, had offered me the shelter of their home, a modern and well-appointed house in the pleasant suburb of Camberwell. It was a kindness I was grateful to accept until more permanent accommodation could be arranged. The Clucas family were elderly folk and had appeared to Mrs. King to be eminently suited to the trust. Mr. Clucas had been Master of the Royal Mint and, having retired some years previously, had become an accomplished "housewife", dividing his time skilfully between household chores and caring for a large garden in which he took great pride. Florence Clucas (née Stillwell), Master of Science, was in 1901 the sixth woman graduate in Science of the University of Melbourne, and the first to have majored in Chemistry. She was a keen social worker, and an active member of the Young Women's Christian Association, having been national honorary secretary over the depression years. She was seldom home.

Mr. Clucas was very fond of John. He never tired of telling me how he had expected that neither Billy nor I would survive internment. Had this happened, he said, he would have adopted John. It was a different matter with Elizabeth. He had found her very difficult. "Mind you," he would add, "we are very fond of her, but . . ." It was quite obvious that he neither understood nor appreciated her. I knew that her faults were being grossly exaggerated and his criticisms were entirely unjust; but I found them disturbing all the same.

Elizabeth never complained. When I asked if she had been happy at Clucas's, she first hesitated from loyalty, and then her eyes filled with tears as she said: "With so many people wanting us, I just can't understand why Auntie should have chosen to send us here."

It had not been easy for Mrs. King. Many of her friends

would have taken Elizabeth, or John, but her idea, with which I was in agreement, had been to try to keep them together and this had restricted her choice of a guardian. She had met Mrs. Clucas through a mutual friend and had taken the trouble to visit their home before entrusting my children into their care. Mr. and Mrs. Clucas had been anxious to do their share in the national war effort. Moreover, as they were elderly, Mrs. King had felt that they might take the place of grandparents so that the risk, of a younger couple alienating the affection of the children from their own parents, would be eliminated. I can only place on record my appreciation of his guardianship of the children and say, in extenuation, that he had meant well. His error was possibly one of judgment. When he realized that he could not gain Elizabeth's confidence, he had tried to force his affection. This she had naturally resented. In his frustration it was perhaps only human nature that made him seek to place the blame entirely on her.

Elizabeth was most anxious for me to meet the Webbs, and we made an early opportunity to accept their invitation to dine. Mr. and Mrs. Webb had met Mrs. King at church and had been intrigued by her "large" family — the three King girls, with my two, making five. The Webb's own family had grown up. They now took a great interest in the young Hong Kong evacuees and often had them spend Sunday afternoons in their large home and garden. It was here that Elizabeth had met Mrs. Webb's nephew, Stewart Doery, who was to be her future husband. The Webbs were extremely kind to me and, over the years, I have found great pleasure and comfort in their friendship.

We called on Mr. J. P. Adam, senior partner in the firm of Weigall and Crowther, in whose custody Mrs. King had entrusted matters of a legal nature. She had met him through his sister, Mary Ashe, whose husband had been a science master at St. Stephen's College in Stanley, Hong Kong. Mr. Adam at once extended this custody to include me. On Sports Day at Presbyterian Ladies' College, he introduced me to the Headmistress, Miss Neilson, and supported me at afternoon tea with the School Council, of which he was a member. It was here, too, that I met his wife, Maud, and his mother, who was

known to all as "Paw-Paw" — a Chinese name for maternal grandmother, adopted when she had visited her daughter in Hong Kong some years before the war. "Paw-Paw" had specially asked to meet me. She was "anxious to see what Elizabeth's mother looked like"! This was the beginning of a long friendship with the family. Maud's kindly understanding has often sustained me in times of trouble and, in John P. Adam, whose advice I continually seek, I have found an ever-willing, ever-patient guide and friend.

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Jones had come from Benalla, a country town, to attend the school sports. They owned a sheep property in what is known as the "Ned Kelly country", about 120 miles north by northeast of Melbourne. Ned Kelly, son of a transported Irish convict was a bushranger who, in the late 1870s, had terrorized the district on the borderland of Victoria and New South Wales. The Joneses had never before met me and our only common interest at the time was that our daughters attended the same school. Yet, because they were idealistic in nature, they were anxious to help me and, being kindly in disposition, they longed to make up to me for what I had lost. They now pressed me to spend some time with them, an invitation which had been extended through Elizabeth. They felt certain that a spell in the country would do much to restore my health.

By this time Elizabeth had gone back to school and I missed her badly. The strain of the past weeks, following years of internment, was having its effect. I felt spiritually destitute and it was rather in desperation that I accepted the Jones's invitation. Thelma Jones would come down for me in a fortnight's time.

Meanwhile I became ill with malaria. Suddenly my courage failed me. My spirit broke. I was terror stricken, alone, and almost insane. I could no longer find comfort in the charm of my children nor gain relief from the kindness of friends. In this state of acute melancholia, living became a hopeless weariness: I prayed for release.

When Mrs. Jones came to Melbourne, I told Elizabeth that I could not possibly go to Benalla with her. Although I was

not happy at Clucases, I felt that I could not face more people I hardly knew. Elizabeth was aghast:

"But, Mother, do you realize that Mrs. Jones has come over a hundred miles just to fetch you?" she asked. "Couldn't you try to go even if it were for a few days? If you found then that you didn't like it there, you could always come back."

I could see the sense of her reasoning and realized how embarrassing it would be for Elizabeth were I to refuse to make the effort. The doctor also thought that the change would help me. And so Mrs. Jones took me to Benalla on the appointed day. At the same time my little outburst had worried Elizabeth: it was quite out of character. I found later that she had confessed her anxiety to Mrs. Jones, asking her not to be offended should I behave peculiarly, or if I preferred to be alone.

I found Thelma Jones to be a gentle and most understanding companion. She anticipated my every thought and desire, stopping the car frequently so as not to tire me, and pointing out places of interest. Had I not felt so ill I would have enjoyed the journey. The day was fine and warm and, being spring, the countryside still looked green and lush. As we climbed the ranges of the Great Divide and entered the sheep country, it was strange to see some of the animals already shorn of their wool whilst others still had heavy coats, making them look twice the size of the shorn. Having driven slowly and stopped often, it was dusk before we reached their property "Avondale". By this time I was too weary to appreciate the meal which had been prepared for my welcome and, asking to be excused, I crept into bed.

The night seemed interminable as I tossed feverish and troubled but towards dawn I fell into a deep and restful sleep.

I awoke to a picture of simple beauty. My hostess had brought my breakfast and had drawn back the curtains. The view from my bed was rather breath-taking, the glory of the morning radiantly bright. Close to the window were the colourful flowers of the garden, then through paddocks and green pastures I could see the hills and trees beyond. The



whole panorama presented a pleasing sight for the vision and a soothing balm to the soul.

Who can do justice to the enchantment of such a place? I was soon up and dressed. Wherever I looked from the homestead, the same simple beauty met my eye. Every room had a picture window, through each of which the aspect was different, yet every one seemed divine. Here lay what I was seeking: here I would find peace and confidence.

Between soft dewy mornings and fine warm days, the quiet of still evenings and the dark starry nights, I could never decide which was the more lovely. I just roamed around, rapt in wonder, completely forgetful of myself.

It was not long before a change came over me. As my spirit became more restful my health gradually improved. I began to eat with relish the good wholesome food which, when I first arrived, I had merely played with. In three weeks I had regained over a stone of my lost weight. The Joneses seemed to know exactly when to talk to me, when to leave me alone. My time was left to me entirely to fill it as I pleased. Gradually I turned from wanderings on my own to the companionship that was waiting to welcome me: I developed an awareness of the many activities of the farm. Everything became novel and interesting, everyone kind and sympathetic. I was initiated into the art of butter making, was a privileged spectator at the shearing shed. We watched the hay crop turn from green to brown, from brown to harvest; the young millet shoot up after every shower of rain. The animals were a part of the family: "Pooh" the cat and "Skipper" the collie each had his place in the home, and when "Pooh" died of old age, his loss was mourned but "Timmie" the kitten endeavoured to fill his place. I fed the horses, made friends with the calf, and found quiet pleasure in watching the lambs at their play. When the household was busy, I would weed the garden. It was good to feel the soil in my hands again. With Albert the farm hand, I went riding. We rounded up cattle, separating and counting them and then drove them from paddock to paddock. On another occasion, we roamed the estate, a property of over two thousand acres, in search of a wily old ram who had escaped the shearers and who was

consequently very much in demand. Although it was years since I had last been on a horse, I found these rides wonderfully exhilarating. I think that to them, more than to anything else, I owed the restoration of my confidence: I was regaining control of body and mind.

There were busy hours of daylight when household duties were lightened with companionship; quiet evenings spent by the fireside in which perfect understanding made no call for speech. We went for long drives in the moonlight, where the soft beauty of nature brought a new serenity, and soothed with the gentleness of a healing balm.

A month passed and the future beckoned like a challenge. The Joneses would have had me stay on for longer but I was anxious to put myself to the test. The days ahead would, I know, be fraught with difficulties and Thelma, being aware of the limitations to my ability in cooking and housekeeping was greatly concerned. She wondered how I would manage. On looking back, I can feel only amazement at my own incredible foolhardiness in rushing in where a wiser person might have hesitated. In my blind faith I tended only to think of the words of the twenty-third Psalm: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He restoreth my soul. Yea though I walk through the valley . . . I will fear no evil." These words had seemed so applicable to my surroundings and had given me such comfort.

On the last day of November, 1945, I wilfully put aside the warmth of the Jones's hospitality to face a bleak and lonely future. That I could attempt this with some degree of confidence and composure, was due entirely to the healing power of the beauty of the country and the kindness of its people. And of my friends and "Avondale", I carried with me fond memories, happy associations and a feeling of intense gratitude.

## LIFE BEGINS AFRESH

"How are you, Mrs. Gittins? I am delighted to meet you. I believe we have a mutual friend in Mr. John Adam." The Registrar, Mr. (later Dr.) John Foster came from behind his desk to greet me and, although at that time, I could not truthfully claim Mr. Adam to be a friend I was grateful that he had paved my way so smoothly into the University of Melbourne.

I had been rather apprehensive of the interview, especially as Mr. Clucas had warned that, not having a degree, I would not stand much chance of getting an appointment.

But the Registrar soon put my mind at rest. "We would be most happy to have you," he said. "Senior people are not easy to come by, especially ones with university experience like yourself. I expect you would prefer to work with one of the professors, but come and join my staff whenever you feel ready for work. In this way you will have first refusal of anything which might turn up. Miss Wardell will look after you."

The interview had taken place before I left for Benalla so that on my return I lost no time in seeing Miss Wardell. And look after me she did. Her friendship was not to be confined to within the University, nor did it last only until I had found my feet. Peggy Wardell had one of those warm and generous natures to whom one naturally turned. She became my champion and remained my confidante for over twenty years — until her recent untimely death.

Under Mr. Adam's sponsorship I found, in addition, accommodation in a hostel for business girls run by the Presbyterian Church but, because I was over the limiting age of twenty-five years, I was accepted only on the condition that I undertook certain staff duties. These were not, in themselves,

burdensome — I had to sit in the office three evenings a week, seeing to it that the girls were all in the building by 11.30 p.m., and then lock up for the night. But in my indifferent state of health, and after a long day at the University, it proved to be quite a strain.

The Presbyterian Girls' Hostel, Chalmers Hall, occupied the old premises of Scotch College in Parliament Place, East Melbourne. From my point of view, it was ideally situated, being only a distance of two miles from the University and a five-minute walk through the Fitzroy Gardens to Elizabeth's school. I had a small, simply furnished room where, coming in from work, I could rest undisturbed. I would relax on my bed in the quiet of the late afternoon, and the rumble of traffic would give way to the chatter of birds as they nested. From my window I could look across the Gardens in which shapely elm trees would be silhouetted against an evening sky, glowing warm and peach-bloomed. There were no worries of cooking nor of housekeeping, for a hot meal was provided in the dining room and even my bedroom was serviced. As a temporary measure the arrangement could not be bettered.

The Registrar was true to his word. From a vantage point in his office, I had the choice of several positions and, on his advice, accepted the one offered in the Department of Pathology, under Professor MacCallum.

Peter (later Sir Peter) MacCallum, M.C., born in Glasgow, educated (M.A., M.Sc.) in New Zealand and, gaining his medical degree in Edinburgh, was appointed to the chair of pathology in the University of Melbourne in 1925. After twenty years in office he was, amongst other things, Chairman of the Professorial Board, President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, and Chairman of the Victorian Regional Committee for Post-war Reconstruction, whose function it was to rehabilitate university ex-service personnel. He was the doyen of pathologists in Australia. He was rather stocky in build but moved with the grace of an athlete. He had white hair and kindly blue eyes. In manner he was graciously courteous. It was said that Professor MacCallum was not a good lecturer — the classical

presentation of his material, coupled with a dry Scottish humour, did not always penetrate the minds of his young Australian audience — nevertheless, the esteem in which he was held was matched only by the affection he stirred. His sympathetic understanding of another's problems, his great patience and innate kindness enslaved many a young heart. A double Blue (athletics and rugby) of the Universities of Edinburgh and of New Zealand, he further endeared himself to students by maintaining a keen interest in sporting activities, holding the joint chairmanship of the Sports Union Council and the Recreation Grounds Committee. Above all he had a rare capacity for attracting young enthusiasts.

Peter MacCallum had introduced wider concepts, instilled fresh thought and injected new life into a tired department. Under his direction the work produced by his staff in the nineteen-thirties earned high distinction and a growing world repute. The names of E. S. J. King, three times winner of the coveted Jacksonian Prize of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, of R. A. Willis, renowned for his studies on tumours and metastatic conditions, and of R. D. Wright, that brilliant and ingenious combination of surgeon-pathologist-physiologist, would stand out amongst any group of research workers. All three were to become professors in their own rights. But with the start of hostilities in Europe in 1939, young hearts had grown restless and some of his staff had left to serve in Egypt and the Middle East. When Japan struck in 1941, the department was, almost overnight, stripped bare of workers leaving Peter MacCallum holding, besides his various commitments, a commission as Consulting Pathologist to the Army, and struggling to run the department with a skeleton part-time staff.

Professor MacCallum was fortunate in having the support of two exceptionally able non-academic staff members who not only gave him their full-hearted loyalty but virtually ran, on his behalf, the internal affairs of the department. James Guthrie, his senior technician and a fellow Scot, and Frieda Davies, his devoted secretary, had both been with him since 1929. The names of these two were known to and, indeed, had become household words among many of the medical

fraternity in Melbourne. Melbourne having, at that time, only the one medical school, most doctors had been through the hands of Mr. Guthrie and Miss Davies when students. Moreover, prior to the establishment by the University of separate departments of medicine and surgery in 1955, the School of Pathology had been the nursery where young aspirants to the wider spheres of academic and clinical specialties came to study the theory of disease.

The war years were indeed a struggle for Professor MacCallum and his depleted staff but, with peace, had come the heavier burden of increasing student numbers. Teaching activities grew even more complex. His chairmanship of the Regional Committee for Post-war Reconstruction carried with it responsibilities which were time-consuming and onerous and, in recognition of this, the Universities Commission had granted him the facilities of extra secretarial assistance which gave rise to the position now offered to me.

I was most hesitant to plunge into so exciting an atmosphere and, in any case, I pointed out to the Registrar, I had promised to take the children away for the last fortnight in January. Actually I would have preferred, either to have felt my way along in a quieter department or, alternatively, gone somewhere in which there would be greater scope for proving my worth. But Professor MacCallum was set on having me and had indicated his willingness that I should be free to take leave of absence whenever I wished to do so. "I am sure you will like working with Professor MacCallum," Mr. Foster added and, perhaps sensing the real reason behind my hesitation, rather cunningly suggested that it was probably Miss Davies's intention to resign as soon as she felt that I could carry on. So, somewhat against my own inclination, I joined the Department of Pathology on 2nd January, 1946.

It was a small department in those days and we were more like members of a family group. Professor MacCallum was a good leader and believed in delegating responsibility to his staff. Mr. Guthrie emanated a friendliness which made for excellent public relations. The Senior Lecturer, Dr. Lowe, had just returned from the army and, because he was still far from well, and I was so very thin, Miss Davies, who had had nursing

training, kept a professional eye on us both, and took pleasure in making for us at least one egg-flip each day. She also made a weekly check on my weight.

Had it been a department of medicine or of surgery, I would have felt more at home in the work but I had had very little to do with pathology and found great difficulty in getting used to the unfamiliar terminology — it was like learning a new language. Miss Davies was extremely proud of the department and its museum of "12,000 specimens, not one of which showed a normal condition" and, more understandably, of Professor MacCallum's standing in the University and the community. Looking back now, I feel that had she spent less effort in loading me with details of the teaching programme and administration with which I had at least had some previous experience, and given more time to explaining the technical nature of the work, I might have been less confused. I found taking dictation from the Professor's reports on biopsy specimens, which he muttered into his microscope as he examined the slide, the most difficult task of all and, if I so much as asked him to repeat a word, he would have to go back right to the beginning and begin all over again! I felt that I would never be able to master the situation and was glad when the time came for me to take the children away.

Holiday accommodation was extremely difficult to find, as bookings were usually made many months ahead, but Mr. Adam was able to get us into a guest house at Mornington, a pleasant and quite popular bayside resort. I never quite knew whether the children enjoyed themselves; I cannot say, with any honesty, that it even approached a good holiday for me. It was of course my own fault. Elizabeth and John were very good, Elizabeth being most helpful and all John wanted was to be with me. Naturally I appreciated being with them but perhaps I had expected that we could just pick up the threads from where we had left off five years before, and failed to realize that I would know little of their present interests. Nor did I possess the ability to draw them out. We were all a little shy. But the guest house was clean and quiet, the meals were of fair quality and adequate, and we made the most of our time on the beach. The only discomfort we suffered was

from the flies during the day and the mosquitoes at night. They were far worse than any I had encountered under the most primitive conditions in China.

This alone would not have worried me but acute anxieties seemed to plague me from all sides. I had gained no confidence about my work at the University and, I suppose, being with the children made me realize, for the first time, how great was my responsibility in having to bring them up on my own. Furthermore, although Father had offered to assist me financially, and was in fact doing so, I felt no confidence in the future. I knew that there was a little capital but, in my anxiety and ignorance, I could not put into any concrete form its size or scope. All I knew was that I must not touch this capital except for the children's education; at the same time I had to face the stark fact that, once I left the hostel, I would find it extremely difficult to manage, even with the aid of the small British war pension, on the salary of £5 per week which I earned at the University. This was provided, of course, that I was able to hold my job there. I spent many a sleepless night. The more I worried, the more panicky I grew.

Over this period I was in constant touch with the family in Hong Kong and, although I endeavoured to be restrained in my letters, some of my distress must have been apparent. Through the Air Ministry in London, I had managed to contact Dr. Riley, the medical officer who had attended Billy in Japan. From him I had received Billy's will and details of his long illness. I wrote frequently to my brother-in-law "M. K.", who was acting for me, and to my sister Grace, with whom I had always been so close. Yet my letters were not altogether despairing, as extracts from copies in my files will show:

"He (Dr. Riley) remembers the case clearly and had known Billy well. It appears that Billy had suffered from general weakness due to dysentery and malnutrition early in 1944 but, later in the year his health had improved. They received a consignment of American Red Cross parcels, a large number of which were kept aside for distribution to the sick. These Dr. Riley had administered personally and Billy had been given daily rations of milk, cheese, butter and meat. They also received American medical supplies which had helped consider-



ably. But the winter had proved too much for him and in February, 1945, he developed pleurisy which turned to pneumonia, of which he died on March 6th."

In another letter I wrote: "I have received many letters from his friends. One who had been with him in 4th Battery, Hong Kong Volunteers, has told me of how Billy had been a 'tower of strength' during the fighting in trying to uphold the morale of his gun crew and how, long after the men had deserted, he had worked to keep the searchlights going. 'Throughout the blitz' he said, 'Bill was his usual placid self, and his fellow NCOs have nothing but the deepest admiration for him'. Others have written of his courage in the fight he had put up during his long illness in Japan: how they had cared for him; how he never lost heart. Contrary to what I had first heard, he had received several letters from Elizabeth and from me. He had been most anxious that I should know, when it was all over, how hard he had tried to live.

The sincerity of expression in this one I found particularly touching: 'I didn't have the pleasure of knowing your Bill in peace time,' he said, 'but I was with him in Shamshuipo Camp where I took to him right away and I think that he liked me too. Whenever we had a few minutes to spare we would sit outside and talk about you and the good times we would have when the war was over . . . We were together in Japan. We had had a long and miserable trip with crowded conditions, bad food and foul weather. It lasted twenty days. He was run down when we left Hong Kong and should never have come away — but you know your Bill. He was ill for a long time after we arrived. There was a lack of medicine and drugs but with the arrival of Red Cross supplies from America he began to pick up. The death of Jimmy Jack in September affected him deeply but, by then, the war news was so good that he was greatly encouraged. He never gave up the struggle although the doctor said he didn't have a chance. We all expected him to pull through . . . Bill was a good friend to me and to many others in our camp, always wanting to share with us any little thing which he had. Perhaps this was a fault of his. I wish to God many more of us were like him.'

It is heartrending to learn of all that he suffered and I cannot help thinking that, had he lost his life during the fighting, he would have been spared the long years of misery which internment imposed. Yet the knowledge that he had had the tender care of his friends and the special attention, which it was in Dr. Riley's power to give him, was in itself a great comfort. The story of his quiet courage under the stress of war and of internment will always be an inspiration to me and an example to the children."

In yet another letter: "Seeing more of John lately has brought home to me the terrible loss that Billy's death will mean to him. Fortunately he is too young and does not remember enough to suffer the pain of bereavement but to lose, at his tender age, all that Billy would have given him is a situation too sad for words. I am thankful that he appears to have inherited that natural charm of disposition and spirit of leadership which were some of Billy's finest qualities and which made him so loved and respected by all who knew him. John is captain of his form — they both are — and very popular. His Headmaster told me he would not be surprised if he (John) became dux of the junior school this year. If he can only retain these qualities as he grows older, I shall have reason to be proud of him.

Elizabeth has done exceptionally well at school. In a competition open to all girls about to enter Form II three years ago, she won the Presbyterian Ladies' College Council's half scholarship which covered a half of her fees up till the end of last year. Results of a recent examination have just been announced. She is the school's new *Effie Liebich* scholar and is entitled to free tuition for the remaining two years. I am so pleased about this, not only for the material help which is considerable, but because of the satisfaction that it gives her to be of genuine assistance to me. She is very sensible in her outlook and most conscious of the problems facing me. She told me the other day that they had £8 in war savings certificates — which they wanted me to have — they had not frittered away the odd sums they have received over the years."

Before long, Grace wrote to say that she was trying to arrange for a short visit to Australia. She hoped to be with us by Easter. This was cheering news indeed and I was

delighted and deeply touched by this further demonstration of her love. Her proposed visit made more pressing the need for appropriate accommodation and, in any case, through an increased intake of girls in the hostel after the annual vacation, I had lost my room overlooking the Fitzroy Gardens, and had been shifted instead to one from which all I could see were grey slate roofs and black chimney tops. Elizabeth was most anxious to come home to live.

But finding suitable accommodation was no easy task. Because of the war, home building had virtually come to a standstill so that, with the return of ex-service people from all fronts, the problem had become so acute that it was said that twenty years must elapse before the housing shortage would be eased. All my friends were tireless in their efforts to help me and I answered a great many advertisements to most of which I did not even receive a reply. Those who did would not consider me as a tenant because I had a young son.

One Saturday morning Elizabeth and I called in answer to an advertisement requiring personal application at a house in Queen's Road. It had been a large residence and was now used as a boarding house. The advertised accommodation referred to a small cottage in the grounds which appeared to us to be very attractively furnished with carpet, bookcases and even a telephone. The rental was reasonable enough, the only drawback being the fact that tenancy was conditional upon an undertaking to clean the two bathrooms in the boarding house each day. A contractual agreement for two years was required.

On looking back after a period of twenty-two years it seems unbelievable that I could even have contemplated accepting such a condition but the matter was of such vital importance that I gave it the most earnest thought.

When she realized that I was already working full-time at the University, the lady of the house said quite frankly that she did not think my health would stand up to the strain. She made the observation that, if Elizabeth could do the cleaning before leaving for school, it might prove a workable arrangement. This I firmly refused to consider.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said kindly, "I will keep the offer open until Monday. I would like to let you have

the cottage but feel that, especially as there is a contract to be considered, you would do well to think the matter over very carefully."

"I didn't know what to do and went to seek the advice of Mr. Adam. Mr. Adam was not one to allow sentiment to cloud his judgment and, after a little deliberation, he said:

"With accommodation being the problem that it is, if the cottage is suited to your needs, I would say that the condition attached should be no bar to your acceptance of the proposition. You should, of course, take into consideration the matter of your health but bear in mind that, these days, no one need be afraid of a little domestic work."

"But, don't you see, Mr. Adam, it is not a question of the amount of work. This would only mean getting up a few minutes earlier each morning. What I am being asked to do is not my own domestic work but that of a boarding house. This is what makes me shrink from the idea."

"I know what you mean, Jean," Maud Adam put in. "Don't you let John push you into anything. I would feel exactly as you do were I in your place. You must think it over very carefully. Don't act hastily, whatever you do."

I thanked them and came away with my problem still unsolved. That evening I telephoned Lionel Adams. I had met Lionel and his wife Molly through Commander Williams, of HMS *Vindex*, on her visit to Melbourne in December. The Adams (not to be confused with Mr. and Mrs. John Adam, whose home is in Kew) lived in Surrey Hills, in a rambling old house with a lovely spacious garden filled with a variety of English trees. They, too, were on the look out for accommodation for me and had given me their phone number to call them if I needed help at any time. Lionel now suggested that they should pick me up in the morning to have a look at the cottage.

The lady of the house was not at home when we called and the cottage was locked but we prowled around and peeped in at the windows.

"H'm," says Molly, not committing herself one way or the other. "Very nice and attractive. I am not surprised that it appeals to you."

"Do you realize that there is no water laid on in this place?" This came from the practical Lionel. "This means that Jean will have to fetch from the main building every drop of water she uses. She will find that a great many buckets of water is required for everyday living." And, turning to me, he said: "I would definitely wait if I were you. Something better will turn up."

Over the years I was to find that Lionel could always be counted on to turn up a practical solution to every problem. He has been the embodiment of a friend in need.

They took me up to Sherbrooke Forest for a picnic lunch and talked me out of the idea altogether — not that I needed much persuasion under the circumstances.

Finally I turned to the Legacy Club, that fine organization — so typically Australian — of ex-servicemen whose aim it is to help the dependents of their fallen comrades. It had been formed after the first world war and, during our war, its activities had been extended to cover all members of the British forces. They had heard of me through the Joneses of Benalla, and had contacted me in December, offering their advice and assistance at any time I may be in need. They now advertised on my behalf and, as a result of this, a shared flat became available and, early in March, 1946, I moved to Elwood, a bayside suburb, to live with an elderly lady, Mrs. E. Caffin.

I had two furnished rooms in her flat — a fair-sized bedroom with a northern aspect which Elizabeth and I were to share, and a small room filled almost to capacity with an old-fashioned dining table and a heavy desk full of Mrs. Caffin's personal effects. Into this room we managed to squeeze John's bed. We shared kitchen and bathroom facilities with the owner, which worked out rather well, as Mrs. Caffin was nothing if not considerate. I realized that sharing a flat was by no means an ideal arrangement but, at the time, it was a god-send. My friends all agreed that this was preferable to my being on my own.

Mrs. Caffin soon recognized my limitations especially in regard to cooking for, having had no previous experience and, with never having been near a gas stove, I didn't even know where to place a piece of bread to make toast. Butter, tea and

meat were rationed. Meat, in particular, presented quite a problem whenever either of the children came home: if I bought enough for us, I would be out of coupons for the rest of the fortnight. I lived mainly on eggs when I could get them, with Mrs. Caffin keeping a motherly eye on me. Elizabeth was to come home at the end of first term in May.

On the Saturday before Easter Grace arrived from Sydney on the *Spirit of Progress*. It was a delightful autumn morning and how wonderful it was to see her again after the long and difficult years. Grace quietly took over as I gave up the unequal struggle of housekeeping and I lapsed into a state of listlessness. Reaction had set in. I became so vague and absent-minded that Grace feared constantly for my safety on the road, and the children must have wondered how in the world I managed to cope with the work at the University. At the same time, with Grace relieving us of household duties, we were able to have little outings at the weekends. She would even take the children ice-skating. I valued every minute of her stay, although the haunting fear that her visit would have to end some day made my blood run cold each time the thought penetrated my consciousness.

Strangely enough I began to take an interest in the department. On my return from Mornington in early February, Miss Davies had taken her annual leave. I was so upset with all her instructions before her departure that I told her I would stay only until her return. I did not feel equal to the task. She confessed to me later that I had ruined her holiday because, turning up as I did out of the blue, she had regarded me as the "finger of fate", giving her the chance — when I was properly trained — of resigning without leaving Professor MacCallum in the lurch.

She must have told the Professor what had passed between us because, during her absence, he made it a point of gently explaining to me the workings of the department. Day by day I began to feel more and more at home. On the evening before Miss Davies's return, he called me into his office. Without much preamble he said:

"I am glad to see you settling down. I should like to take you into my confidence. I am going to ask Miss Davies

to marry me" (he was a widower) "and would very much like you to take her place."

I was surprised, to say the least, not so much at his wish to marry Miss Davies because it was obvious that he was entirely dependent on her, but at his taking me, a comparative stranger, into his confidence in so personal a matter. But I was to learn that this was Peter MacCallum's way. He formed an opinion, almost at first meeting. If this were favourable, unless events caused him to change his mind, he would generously confer implicit trust. What could I do but promise to try to justify his trust in me? I warned, however, that he was taking a tremendous risk.

On Miss Davies's return, things were just a little awkward. I was in the situation of knowing something that I was not supposed to know; I had to be her understudy without appearing to have her position in mind. She had long decided that it would take two years for her successor to be schooled adequately but, by the end of April, I begged Professor MacCallum to proceed with his plans if he wished me to remain friends with Miss Davies. I could carry on the pretence no longer!

They were married quietly during vacation early in June. Mr. Guthrie and I were the only ones in the department to be told of their plans. Frieda and I naturally remained friends but, even though the change took place with little disruption to Professor MacCallum's activities, or to the smooth running of the department, I don't think she ever quite resigned herself to the fact that she was no longer his secretary. Seventeen years is a long time and I suppose it is only natural that one should feel a little jealous of one's successor.

Whilst the Professor and Frieda were on their honeymoon I received an offer from the United Kingdom Army Liaison Staff in Melbourne to repatriate me to Hong Kong. Actually an offer had come earlier from the office of the Vice-Admiral, British Pacific Fleet, which I had refused, having decided to stay on until the children had completed their schooling. There was now an added reason for my not going: I had only just taken over Frieda's position. So I threw the letter into the waste paper basket. But Grace was now with me and she

quickly retrieved it, pointing out how foolish I was not to give the matter further thought.

"You ought to go home for a trip," she said. "What you need is not so much a rest but to be thoroughly spoiled by your friends in Hong Kong. Everybody is asking after you. Do come home with me. You need have no worries about expense because you can stay with us, and I am sure that "M.K." and Horace (Grace's husband) would arrange for your fare, should you decide to return to Melbourne."

"I am sure you are right, Grace, but this is not the time to go. How could I possibly walk out on Professor MacCallum?"

"If your health breaks down you would have to walk out on him," was Grace's rejoinder.

During the next few days the matter was brought to a head.

Taking advantage of the vacation, we had arranged in the department a programme of skin testing of the students for tuberculosis, as part of a research project in which Dr. Lowe was engaged. In the middle of the tests during one lunch time, and for no apparent reason, I fainted. When I recovered, Dr. Lowe suggested that I should see a specialist and sent me to Dr. Leonard B. Cox, a neurologist, and a friend of the Professor.

Dr. Cox gave me a most careful examination, decided that there was no organic disorder but, in his opinion, he said, I was certainly not physically fit to carry out the exacting duties which an appointment as Professor MacCallum's secretary demanded. He advised that I should take a prolonged holiday. When I mentioned the offer of a trip to Hong Kong, Dr. Cox thought it would be the perfect answer to my problem. He felt sure, he said, that Professor MacCallum would agree with him. The Registrar was of the opinion that the position would be held open for me and advised me to apply to the University immediately for three months' sick leave.

People laughed outright when I told them I intended going to Hong Kong for a health trip. I was a little diffident myself about the wisdom of my choice and, in fact, shortly before we were due to sail, a letter was received from the Hong



Kong Government representative in Sydney, giving a résumé of conditions in the colony. The idea was definitely to discourage intending repatriates: Hong Kong was in no state to receive an influx of drones. But the fact remained that I was homesick and heartsick and, especially as Professor MacCallum, on his return, was anxious that I should not miss such an opportunity, I decided to take the risk.

Grace and I applied to travel together and were given passages on the first available repatriation ship, M.V. *Nellore*, due to leave Melbourne on 29th July. Poor Elizabeth. It was disappointing for her to have to return to school as a boarder after so brief an interlude but she, too, was anxious that I should have the holiday and accepted the situation philosophically. She and John knew that I would not desert them now.

## HONG KONG — 1946

The M.V. *Nellore*, of just under 10,000 tons was built during the second world war as the *Empire Joy*. She was commissioned by the British Admiralty in 1945 as a supply ship in the merchant service. In May, 1946, she was handed over to the Eastern and Australian Shipping Company, who had lost its entire fleet as a result of enemy action, to replace the old *Nellore*. Her officers were Australian. She had a Chinese crew.

The new *Nellore* was to be a cargo ship with cabin accommodation for only a few passengers. In this her maiden voyage under her new flag, she was to carry repatriates to Hong Kong. The cabins had been fitted with extra bunks. Passengers numbered about thirty. Grace and I, with several others, sailed from Melbourne on 29th July. The rest embarked in Sydney. Molly and Lionel Adams came to the ship to see us off.

The Captain, who had been in command of the old *Nellore* when she was sunk in the Indian Ocean in 1942, and was subsequently interned in Japan, rarely joined us at meals. "Jonesie" the Chief Steward, was also of the old ship. He had brought Elizabeth and John to Melbourne in 1941 and, recognizing the name, Gittins, decided to place us at the table of the Chief Engineer, Mr. A. J. Norman. "Chiefie" as we called Mr. Norman, was a most attentive and entertaining host. The cares soon slipped from my shoulders. We had an excellent trip. In fact, long before we reached our destination, Grace had made the suggestion that, should I decide to carry out my intention of returning to Australia, I should endeavour to travel on *Nellore*. Thus began a long association in which "Chiefie" was a link between the family and me as the ship

plied backwards and forwards between Melbourne and the Far East.

The first landmark I saw, as we approached Hong Kong after a year of exile, was Stanley peninsula which held so many memories for me. Fort Stanley waved us a greeting and, as we slipped by, I caught a fleeting glimpse of the white gaol, and the surrounding buildings which had been our home for three and a half long years. Island Bay swept by, Shekko Beach and Big Wave Bay — like friendly faces — and, as we rounded the coast and turned towards Lyemun Pass, I saw the familiar outline of Lion Rock but, almost at the same instant, the hideous shadow of the Japanese war memorial on Mount Cameron hove into view. The monstrosity was a crime in architecture and, until its demolition some time later, stood as a constant reminder to Hong Kong's people of their years of bondage. Passing Pak Sha Wan I thought of Billy and of his struggle to keep the searchlights sweeping the harbour and, entering its narrow entrance with Lyemun Fort to the left and Devil's Peak on our right, I lived again those first days of the war, when outnumbered and hard pressed by the invading forces, our troops had withdrawn from the mainland at this point. Here had been enacted the Dunkirk in the Battle for Hong Kong.

The morning of 18th August, 1946, was definitely "muggy", the sky overcast and grey and, as we entered the harbour, I was filled with sudden disappointment. Taikoo Dockyard which, in normal times, was such a hive of activity, showed a scene of dismal dejection. Even the waterfront looked weary and forlorn. Where was the industry of yesterday?

We docked at North Point on the island. We had race horses to disembark. Among the first items of news to reach us was word that a strike was on: the Star Ferry, that symbol of efficiency and reliability which stopped for nothing but the severest of typhoons, had followed the trend of modern industry in its conduct of disputes! It was true that, having arrived from Australia, strikes were by no means a novelty for me, yet I was not prepared for this. Before the war, they were almost unknown in the colony, the only one of consequence being the general strike of 1925. The Star Ferry dispute,

however, caused us no real inconvenience because Grace's husband, Horace, had arranged for a launch to meet us, and we and our belongings were soon ferried across to the other side.

At first glance, Kowloon seemed fairly normal. But, instead of a fleet of modern buses at the pier by the Star Ferry, we were met by a host of rickshaws, tricycles and bicycles, all clamouring for patronage. Again we were independent. Horace's car was standing waiting. In ten minutes we were home.

During the fighting in December, 1941, after the withdrawal of our forces from Kowloon, many homes, including my own, had been completely looted. Kowloon Tong was in a less vulnerable area and Grace's servants had managed to keep the looters away. Shortly after our capitulation, Japanese officers had taken over her house and lived in it throughout the period of the occupation of Hong Kong. The result was that, except for the things which had taken *their* fancy, most of Grace's possessions had remained intact. What a home-coming it was. Dogs mad with excitement. Ah Sing, Grace's amah, quite overcome, her kind heart too full for speech. And roses in my bedroom . . . . .

Early in the afternoon we recrossed the harbour to visit Father at *Idlewild*. I felt like the returning prodigal. It was five years since I had seen him. He did not appear any older and was just as alert as he had always been. He had told his staff that on no condition was anyone to upset me — he was anxious that I should have a good holiday. Naturally I could not help being somewhat overcome at the sight of the old servants: in the few minutes before entering his room, I had spoken with them. Father was delighted to see me but noticed immediately that I was a little distressed. He insisted on knowing who had upset me!

He told me he planned to give a luncheon party (he did not attend late functions himself), to which I was to invite as many of my friends as I wished. And what a party it turned out to be. The large dining room was filled. Besides the family, guests included several of the University professors, the Director of Medical Services, those of my Stanley friends,

including police officers, who were in Hong Kong at the time, "Chiefe", and other Australians from the *Nellore*. Later that day there was a reunion with Vic and "M.K.", and with Florence and "K.C.", and their families, before we returned to Kowloon Tong. Thus was the first of the thirty-five days I spent in Hong Kong in 1946. What a wealth of love and affection, of generosity and kindness. For the first time in five years, I experienced genuine contentment and happiness.

During the next few days I visited Billy's parents who had returned from China and consoled them. Then I spent some time in the city, meeting with acquaintances in the streets and calling on friends in their offices. There was many a warm handshake — mute expression of compassionate friendship — many a smile of real pleasure, to see me looking so well, and promises were exchanged of further meetings before I sailed again.

Grace and I borrowed Father's car to show our Australian friends the Hong Kong of which we were so proud. We went via Shauiwan, past Shekko to Stanley, where we had a look at what had once been the camp for civilian internees. Our quarters had been re-occupied by their rightful owners, the warders of Stanley Prison, who were, they told us, "having their own back" at the Japanese war criminals in the gaol. We visited the quiet cemetery where so many had been laid in everlasting repose. From Stanley we drove to Repulse Bay and on to the Peak. We left the car at the tram terminus to view the magnificent harbour — a grand panorama indeed — seemingly untouched by the ravages of war. The cable tram was again running. A few, very few, people were braving the inconvenience of living in their old homes on the Peak. There would have been a far greater number had more of these homes been in a livable condition, but the devastation of this once exclusive residential district was pathetic. A number of houses on the Peak had been damaged during the fighting; others simply told a story of sheer wanton neglect. During our internment the Japanese authorities, in their desire to humiliate us, had deliberately suspended all vigilance and had actually encouraged the starving populace of the city to plunder and destroy wherever they would. Father's house, *The Falls*,

suffered both from war and from pillage. As we wandered around we saw that a bomb had damaged a large section of one of the main bedrooms upstairs, leaving a gaping hole in the roof, and the steel rods, which had reinforced the concrete floor, could be seen twisted and rusted through the ceiling of the once stately dining hall below. Shells had blasted the beautiful finish in Shanghai plaster of the entire front of the building. Looters had plundered all timber from parquetry floors and panelled walls — even the stairs had been stripped bare of woodwork. Copper piping had been torn from the plumbing. All furniture had been removed. The house was just a broken shell. We thought of Mother, and breathed a prayer of thankfulness that, passing away as she had done before the war, she had at least been spared the heartbreak that would otherwise have been hers.

Friday, 30th August, was the first anniversary of Liberation Day for Hong Kong. The event was marked by an observance at the Cenotaph, and an issue of commemorative stamps. The deeply moving ceremony ended with the *Last Post* and a March Past — sufficient demonstration of good faith and remembrance. The stamps, of two denominations, depicted the Lion of Great Britain in company with the Chinese Phoenix — symbolic of a new era of prosperity and peace between the two nations.

Thanksgiving service was held on Sunday, 1st September, at St. John's Cathedral. The stained glass windows which had been removed by the Japanese were still missing and the organ had yet to be restored; but the atmosphere was quiet and restful and the service, conducted by the Bishop, was beautiful in its simplicity and in harmony with our thoughts.

It might be recalled that, in my young days, my associations with the police were not always happy. In fact I had, on more than one occasion, had the doubtful honour of being summoned before a police magistrate. This was usually on account of some trifling infringement of traffic regulation, or due to failure to comply with the order for muzzling dogs. It was therefore with interest and pleasure that I accepted Horace's invitation to attend the Police Court at which he sat as a magistrate. I was to be a special guest of the Police. It required quick thinking on my part to identify the spruce-

looking officers I met at the Kowloon Magistracy with the faces of friends and former fellow-internees. There was, for instance, a big brawny "Ginger" who looked particularly smart that morning. He recognized me instantly but my memory failed, and it was not until we were half way through the Court's proceedings that I was able to associate this handsome hero with the faithful but grimy "Smoky Joe" of camp days. For three and a half years in Stanley, Inspector Joe Witcroft had been stoker of our grass-fueled boiler for hot water and, on more than one occasion, I had had reason to bless his kind soul.

I was frequently asked: "What do you think of Hong Kong?" It was a question to which I could truthfully answer. I was simply astounded at the progress it had made. I could not easily forget the "ghost" city that had met me in September, 1945, and now, in just under one year, Hong Kong had become, not only a model of law and order with all its services functioning, but it had once again established itself as one of the busiest centres of world trade. Although the dockyards, owing to extensive damage as a result of bombing by our allies during the war, were as yet idle, the harbour was filled daily with ships from all continents, loading and unloading cargo of all description. It would not be out of place to quote from notes I made in preparation of a talk I was to give at Elizabeth's school on my return:

"I counted the ships one day. There were no less than seventy-five of over, say, 6000 tons — and that was only as far as I could see. It is true that this number included ships of His Majesty's Navy, whose base has been re-established in Hong Kong. There is a daily service of planes to Canton, Shanghai, Hankow and Chungking, and an airmail service three times a week via Singapore to the United Kingdom and Australia. The train from Canton pours in crowds of people twice daily. The estimated influx from China is from five to seven thousand each day." This was the start of the rapidly increasing problems of over population and water shortage which assumed such alarming proportions in later years.

To quote again from my notes:

"Motor traffic to Canton is possible though not comfortable

because the roads are still in poor repair. Rail service to Hankow has been resumed. Transport difficulties in Hong Kong and Kowloon are being rapidly solved. The number of taxis increases daily. On the island trams run from Shaukiwan to West Point, buses from the Star Ferry to the University and Repulse Bay, and the funicular tram up and down the Peak. When the strike was settled, ferries resumed their cross-the-harbour run and even the vehicular ferry, with but a single boat, struggled bravely to give a restricted service. During the war Japan had shipped away our cars and any "hardware" they could lay their hands on. They even took the bronze statues of Queen Victoria and other members of the royal family from Statue Square. Their loot included our modern diesel-engine buses but, nothing daunted, the Kowloon Motor Bus Company runs a schedule of converted trucks to Kowloon City, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon Tong and Shamshuipo. These may not be as stream-lined in appearance, nor as comfortable as those they are replacing, but they serve the purpose extremely well."

The cost of living, as might have been expected, was very high but essential foodstuffs, like rice and flour, were rationed and their prices controlled. All residents able to prove citizenship of seven years' standing before the war were entitled to buy government rice at twenty cents\* a catty†. Prices of other necessities were fixed at two to four times the pre-war level and, to enforce this a price control board had been set up. Price lists were published frequently; offenders were prosecuted and heavily fined. Vegetables were scarce and very expensive, although this was partly seasonal but, in order to ease the situation, arrangements had been made to buy and collect all produce from growers, to be retailed in the markets at reasonable prices. Luxury goods were not controlled. Liquor and nylon stockings were easily obtainable and could be indulged in if one's pocket allowed.

Again I quote from my notes:

"The Hong Kong Electric and the China Light and Power

---

\* Bank exchange in August, 1946, was:

(Ster.) 1/3d = HK\$1.00; HK\$16.00 = (Ster.) £1

(Aust.) 1/6d = HK\$1.00; HK\$12.50 = (Aust.) £1

† One catty weighs one pound and one-third; i.e., 3 cattys = 4 lbs.



Companies are both functioning normally and are supplying sufficient electricity for general consumption, including the air-conditioning of picture theatres, the Dairy Farm, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. And is it a necessity, with temperatures of over 90°F., and relative humidity averaging 95%? The Gas Company is also making headway in repairs to damaged and neglected mains and equipment, and expects soon to supply gas even to the Peak district. The bathing beaches are lovely as ever, but a shortage of private cars makes them as yet inaccessible to the general public. Shipments of cars, however, arrive daily, as do supplies of all manner of goods. There's not much one can't buy in Hong Kong. Compared with the interminable queues for cigarettes in Australian cities, traysful of the best British and American brands are carried around for one's choice and convenience — such is the enterprise of the Chinese.

Many of the schools have re-opened and the University of Hong Kong is awaiting results from London of the matriculation examination held earlier in the year. First year classes in Medicine, Engineering, Arts and Science are expected to resume in November, though the sight of some of the buildings is heart-breaking enough. In the main section, the Great Hall stands open to the sky, stripped of all but the bare walls, the Medical Schools, the Northcote Science Building, the Ho Tung Engineering Workshop, and the Peel Engineering Laboratory are all mere shells. The Library, fortunately, was saved from looters by a loyal Chinese staff; in its main reading room stand the desks of the professorial Deans of Faculties, and that of the Acting Registrar — the nucleus of a brighter "Lighthouse of the East" where, for almost five years, the lamp had been snuffed out.

One thing holds back the programme of reconstruction: the housing situation is desperate. Added to the daily arrival of former residents is the huge influx of refugees from China. Accommodation is strained to breaking point. The long summer has passed quietly without epidemics of dysentery or cholera, the high incidence of malaria has been controlled with the periodic spraying of DDT from the air but, with the advent of winter, a sharp rise in cases of smallpox is giving

the health authorities cause for concern. Mass vaccination is widely and persistently encouraged and clinics have been set up everywhere to facilitate this.

The city is overcrowded, transport facilities are inadequate, the cost of living is too high and, in spite of good reservoirs, severe water restrictions have had to be imposed. There are moaners in the hotel lobbies and beggars in the streets, but the people, on the whole, are happy and contented. Banished forever are the expressions of insecurity, fear and abject misery which, but a year ago, were evident on almost every face. A gallant people, supporting a courageous government, all anxious to lend a hand in the rebirth of Hong Kong."

I tore myself away from my home and my people and, with a heavy heart, answered the call of duty in a strange land. It was difficult to turn my back on all that Hong Kong would have given me but, having had this respite, I could now leave with the assurance that, in the execution of that duty, I carried the whole-hearted support of my family and all my friends. When I took my leave of Father, he handed me a cheque to cover the purchase of a car in Melbourne. It is true that this was no spontaneous gesture — that would have been entirely out of character — but the fact that he had given it meant a great deal to me. The decision to request this favour of him had been made prior to my departure from Melbourne, in preparation for which Lionel Adams had been asked to investigate the cost and availability of a small car on my behalf. He had found that a sum of £500 would place a Standard "Little Nine" on the road; waiting time, even with my war service priority, was approximately twelve months.

"I hope you won't be too disappointed if he refuses," Grace had warned. "Father lost a lot of property during the war, you know, and it is very doubtful if he will recover any of it in compensation. You will understand what this would mean to him. But ask him by all means. If he doesn't prove too generous, I am sure Horace and "M.K." will help you."

Vic had said much the same thing when I discussed the matter with her. At least I had their support. I awaited my opportunity.

It came one day when Father asked if I had any ideas about the quality of the Melbourne press.

"I wouldn't know," I replied. "I haven't the time to look at a paper in Melbourne. There is so much to be done in the mornings before I leave for work, and getting the evening meal takes a long time. There is, in addition, the problem associated with travelling. I have to make three changes in public transport to and from the University daily, and when there is a strike of trams or trains, I have to stand and wait for some one to give me a lift. I have been wondering if you would be so good as to help me with a car?" Then, because I believe in stating my case fully, I added: "It would cost £500 to put a small car on the road."

"I should be delighted to help you," Father replied. "Go home and work out how much assistance you will require and I will see what can be done."

"Father," I said seriously, "I don't intend spending a penny of my own money on this. What I have is reserved strictly for the children's education and for emergencies—although I sometimes feel that this is an emergency. If I don't have a car soon, I will surely die. But please take your time," I added, "and help me only with what you can spare. Horace and "M.K." have both said that they would assist if I were short of the target and, if your combined efforts are not sufficient, I will launch an appeal to my friends for subscriptions."

I think that he really believed I would do this. In any case, he asked whether the £500 required was sterling currency or Australian and promised to think it over. He would let me know, he said, before I left Hong Kong. I knew then that his answer would be favourable.

On 21st September *Nellore* sailed for Sydney. The voyage might have been a most unhappy one, had I not been so well looked after. As it was, the twelve days slipped by in pleasant relaxation. Nothing was spared to make me more comfortable; nothing I fancied could not be found. I was given a guided tour of the engine room, and became a regular member of the group who examined the ship's daily log. I had use of the purser's office when I wished to work; expert

assistance was forthcoming when it came to wrestling with custom's declarations and problems of contraband. And so the days passed. At the scheduled time we paused at Thursday Island to take on the pilot who was to guide our course through the beautiful Whitsunday Passage. As we sailed down the Australian coast to approach Sydney, I had a feeling which amounted to a firm conviction that, far from losing all that I cherished and longed for, I was going to find happiness and contentment in my new home. Moreover, there were Elizabeth and John, and good friends as well, in Melbourne who were waiting to welcome me: I would not be alone.

## PROBLEMS OF THE POST-WAR YEARS

"Will you be spending any time in Sydney, Mrs. Gittins?" The immigration officer, who had shown a marked interest in my passport, asked on my arrival.

"Why, yes," I replied. "I will be stopping a few days with my late husband's sister, Mrs. Fisher, at Rose Bay. Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering if you could come to see me at my office?"

"Certainly," I said. "Is there something wrong?"

"Oh, no," he reassured me smilingly. "I would just like to have a chat with you."

I felt uneasy. Busy immigration officers did not spend their time "chatting". It must be something to do with my dual nationality, I thought, and yet, as far as I knew, my passport was in order.

We made a time and, in due course, I called to see him.

The officer wanted to know when and how I had come to Australia.

"I arrived on the 2nd of October, 1945, on HMS *Vindex*."

"That is what I thought from what you told me the other day," he said. "There is something very strange here. I met the ship myself and I did not see you. Furthermore there is no record of entry on your passport, nor is your name on the passenger list."

He handed the list to me and continued: "These are serious omissions. Is there any explanation you can give me? Or perhaps you could tell me what happened?"

I looked at the list. I was staggered. The names were certainly those of my fellow passengers but mine was not on it. And all this time I had been blissfully unaware that my

original entry into Australia had been made illegally. I forced myself to remain calm.

"I am not likely to forget that day," I recalled. "It was a year ago yesterday. I was not expecting to disembark in Sydney but to go on to Melbourne. At the last minute, however, *Vindex* had received orders to return immediately to Hong Kong. I remember being told to see the Red Cross officials, also someone from the Department of Social Services, but although I had had my passport with me (many of the passengers had lost theirs in the war), I don't remember seeing you. I could have been in my cabin packing when you interviewed the other passengers. If you think that I was smuggled into Australia, you are mistaken. It is true that I received preferential treatment—everybody was extremely kind—but the omissions were not intentional. I didn't see you because I wasn't told to do so and, as for my name not being on the list, the only reason I can offer is that those passengers were all from Stanley, whereas I embarked from Hong Kong, where I had been working with the "take-over" Government. It is possible that the list had been prepared before they decided to send me and someone forgot to add my name. You might remember that Hong Kong had been occupied by the Japanese for nearly four years. Conditions were far from normal when we sailed."

"You mentioned preferential treatment. What sort of preferential treatment did you have? And why was it given to you?"

I was in a jam and I knew it. Mr. Pegg's advice in camp, about telling people who my Father was, came to my mind. I decided to make use of everything I had.

"I wouldn't really know," I began casually, "except that I was sent away because of my health. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong had arranged for my travel through the Adjutant of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. Mr. Sloss saw me on board personally and made sure that I would be well cared for. I had the only single berth cabin on the ship. The doctor kept his eye on me for most of the voyage. I think that all this was done because they had heard that my husband, a prisoner-of-war, had not sur-

vived internment in Japan and, in view of my close association with the University, the Vice-Chancellor had taken it upon himself to be personally responsible for my welfare. I suppose that being my Father's daughter might have made a difference."

"Your Father, Mrs. Gittins? Who is he?"

"One could say that he is rather a special benefactor of the University of Hong Kong. He is also a British knight."

"You are partly Chinese, are you not, Mrs. Gittins?" And, without waiting for me to reply he added: "What percentage?"

"Fifty per cent. But what has this to do with my passport?"

"It has a great deal to do with your entry into Australia. Are you sure that it is fifty per cent? Couldn't you make it a little less?"

"I am sorry, officer. Not forty-eight per cent nor yet forty-nine per cent but fifty per cent."

"In that case I am afraid I shall have to take some action in the matter. You will most likely have to report at regular intervals to the immigration office in Melbourne, that is, if you wish to remain in Australia."

"Why, Officer?"

"That is the law of the country, Madame. I am sorry. However, I am satisfied that the irregularity connected with your entry into this country was not made deliberately. I will send my report to the authorities in Canberra and you will hear from the Immigration Department in due course. Meanwhile, please carry on as if nothing had happened. And thank you for coming in to see me."

This wasn't exactly a pleasant welcome but it could have been worse, much worse. I was thankful that the interview had taken place in the privacy of his office and not on board ship. I realized that this immigration officer, at least, had handled a delicate situation with extraordinary tact. Nevertheless, the thought of having to pay periodic visits to the immigration office in Melbourne was both distasteful and depressing. It hurt me deeply to think that, in a country so hungry for migrants — there had been much talk of plans to import the illegitimate and unwanted children of German soldiers in Norway — the right of permanent residency to res-

pectable people, purely because they carried in their veins a fifty per cent of Asian blood was to be denied. It mattered not to this country if these people were British nationals, nor that they were families of deceased members of the British fighting forces. It was all I could do not to turn around and go back to where I *was* wanted.

When I arrived in Melbourne and told Professor MacCallum about my experience, he said he understood that the immigration laws of this country were such that they had it in their power to deport anyone, whatever his nationality, they chose to class as undesirable. "All they would have to do is to give you a language test (usually Gaelic) which, if you failed, would be sufficient grounds for deportation. If they should do this to you, I will teach you Gaelic myself! But don't you worry. The University will see to it that nothing unpleasant happens to you."

It was to be a year before I received a peremptory note ordering me to report to the immigration office in Melbourne "bringing your children with you." However, we were treated with every courtesy on our arrival. I asked immediately if the children could be excused; there was no reason why they should be subjected to the embarrassment of a discussion on racial discrimination, and they were permitted to leave.

"The University is very much afraid of losing you," the officer began. "Our Minister has received letters from several of the professors. But they need not have feared. There is no objection to your staying as long as you wish. In fact, you and your children are just the type of migrants we would welcome. We had to do our duty, that was all. Anyway, you have the Minister's assurance that you will not be worried again." I gathered that the children's presence was required so that a check could be made of their appearance. If they were to remain in the country, and possibly become Australians, they had to look the part!

Meanwhile I settled in at the department. Professor MacCallum's term of office as Chairman of the Professorial Board, and as Victorian President of the British Medical Association, had expired but he had been elected Dean of



the Faculty of Medicine. He was, if this were possible, even in greater demand than before.

His load was a heavy one. I became increasingly engrossed in the affairs of the department and, I am rather ashamed to say, the children were at times relegated to second place. They realized, however, the importance of my work to me and accepted the situation as a matter of course.

I did not, of course, neglect them altogether. Elizabeth had been very disappointed when I decided that she should remain as a boarder at school. My chief concern had been for her studies. She was due to sit her school leaving certificate examination at the end of the year, and I was anxious that she should not have to divide her attention between her school work and, because of her helpful disposition, the inevitable household chores. Unfortunately just at this time she had become rather unsettled at school. She told me that irrespective of the result of her examination, she did not wish to return the following year. She had no desire to go on to the University.

This was a bitter blow, especially as the reason she put forward was that she was tired of study and wished to earn her own living instead. I appreciated that it was awkward to have restricted means in a school like P.L.C. but guessed that the main reason underlying her attitude was her concern for my financial difficulties and, remembering my own happy university days, I was more than ever determined that she should have her opportunity. I was in a quandary as to the best method of tackling this situation and turned to her Headmistress, Miss Neilson, for advice.

Miss Neilson was most sympathetic and did not hesitate to give her opinion. "It would be criminal," she said, "not to let Elizabeth go to university. It doesn't matter what course she takes, she would do equally well. I have watched her throughout the years. She is a most thoughtful child, you know, and I am certain that it is her desire to be helpful that makes her act in this manner. She should have no worry about finance, though. She is bound to qualify for a Commonwealth grant. I would not hear of her stopping, if I were you."

I didn't. Elizabeth went on to matriculation and, as Miss Neilson had predicted, qualified for a Commonwealth grant. She was a school prefect and Head of *Koorinya*, the boarding house. She went on to the University and elected to study for a bachelor's degree in the physical sciences. This was by no means an easy task, especially for a girl, but she stuck to it with admirable perseverance and singleness of purpose. When I saw how hard she had to work, I would sometimes wonder whether I had been justified in pressing her to go on with her studies. And then, when she was married immediately after passing her final examinations, people suggested that the years had been wasted. In spite of this, I still feel that, although she may not be putting her scientific training to direct use, she must apply it subconsciously to her practice of domestic art. More important still, her degree and general university background are assets which qualify her to take her place in the community with confidence. These assets will be hers for all time.

I had my troubles with John too. He appeared to be getting on well at school but had grown very quiet. He was not dux of the Junior School but Mary King, who came down from Hong Kong at the end of 1946 and attended Speech Day with me, had the satisfaction of seeing him go up for three prizes. Soon after this, he went down with an attack of otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear) and, although the condition soon cleared with treatment, his hearing was left permanently impaired.

One day, apropos of nothing, Dr. Rose, our new lecturer, asked me:

"Are you planning for your John to come to the University?"

"I hope that he will," I replied. "Why do you ask?"

"I was thinking that you ought to send him to a public school. Carey would be all right if he were brilliant but should he be only average, you are not giving him the best chance. Competition is very keen these days."

Bill Rose had been in the department for several months. I had learnt to appreciate his direct manner and respected his judgment. He was a born physician, kindly and sympathetic,

who took an interest in people and was ever ready to extend help or advice to those in need. He now holds one of the senior staff appointments at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. I could not, however, agree with him that John was not getting the best at Carey. I thought a lot about it though.

From Junior School John had moved into Form I. There had been a change of headmasters at the school. I had noticed lately that he had grown quieter and sometimes even seemed withdrawn. He had been given permission to spend weekends at home but now seemed hesitant to avail himself of the privilege. I had put this hesitancy down to an awareness on his part that the other boys did not share this privilege so did not press him. On the way back to school one day he confessed to me that he had again "that awful feeling in my stomach." I knew then that something was very wrong, yet I could not tell what was the cause of his nervousness. It worried me very much.

Shortly after this he telephoned me in great excitement one Friday evening: he wouldn't be home until noon on Saturday because he had been selected to play in a football match. When he did come, dejection was written all over his face. He hadn't played after all, but had stood in the cold and the rain, having only been a reserve. At the first opportunity I mentioned it to the Headmaster who explained that John was unfortunately an in-between in age: he was too old to be considered for the "under twelves" and too young to stand a chance of selection for the "under thirteens". It would be difficult to give him a game. I determined then that he should go to a school where there would be more than one team for each age group.

Professor MacCallum was very busy, and I knew that I should not have worried him, especially as he had a habit of dropping his own problems when confronted with someone else's. But time was getting on: if there was to be a change of schools for John, I would have to do something about it soon.

"Dr. Rose is quite right," he said, when he had heard me out. "In my opinion, the public\* schools are the best —

---

\* Private schools run by various religious denominations.

especially in John's case — because they give so much more than mere school work. But the standard of teaching at some of the high† schools is even better than that in the public schools. It is generally agreed that the associated grammar‡ schools come a poor third. This is due to no fault of theirs. They just haven't the means to attract the best teachers. John would be far better equipped to go on to university if you were to send him to a public school next year."

In his usual generous manner Professor MacCallum took the matter further. "Have you any particular school in mind? Scotch College? Now that is a fine school — one of the best. We had better ring the headmaster immediately to see if we can get him in."

But Mr. Gilray was unable to help. They did not have sufficient places for their own boys coming up from junior school, he said.

"Let us try Geelong Grammar," Professor MacCallum went on. "As you know, I sent Peter there. If I had to make the choice again I would still do likewise. However, it would be better to write, as this gives them a chance to consider the situation in its true perspective. I feel sure that had Mr. Gilray known the full story, he would have given a different reply."

Geelong Grammar did not have a vacancy either but, in view of the special circumstances, they would make a place for John.

And so, early in 1949, John entered Geelong Grammar. It took a while for him to come out of his shell and he never made the first team but there was cricket, and cross country running, and boxing and other things. Above all, they taught him independence and initiative and cultivated in him a love for outdoor living and a lasting interest in birds. When school fees had to be raised, they gave him a bursary. John never looked back.

Father's long awaited car arrived in May, 1947 — a little sooner than expected. Suddenly I felt a momentary panic, wondering whether I would be able to bear the responsibility

---

† Government secondary schools.

‡ Small private schools.

of ownership but, as soon as I had the steering wheel in my hands, my confidence returned. It was a wonderful moment. The car made a tremendous difference to daily living although petrol rationing posed an almost unsurmountable difficulty: I was allowed barely sufficient for travel to and from work, let alone for pleasure. Fortunately the staff — doctors had a special allowance — especially Dr. Bowden, the Stewart Lecturer, obliged with a coupon now and then, so that I was able to have an occasional outing with the children. We called the car "Roberta", after Father.

My biggest problem was still to come. As the children grew older the need to have our own home became more pressing. Mrs. Caffin had provided a good stop-gap and, as so often happens with elderly people when their affection is stirred, had become possessive to a degree that was embarrassing. Mrs. Caffin grew to be very fond of me. When the children came home for their holidays she was kind enough to them whilst I was away at work, but I sensed the loneliness she felt when deprived of my company in the evenings and relations became a little strained. Moreover Elizabeth, in particular, was anxious to have her friends home for weekends. The time had come to move on.

I talked the matter over with Mrs. Caffin. She was naturally disappointed at the prospect of losing me but she recognized the problem and we arrived at an amicable arrangement: I should leave her in four months' time.

The heartbreak that went with house-hunting began all over again. My friends were alerted. I studied the advertisement columns, answered any that seemed at all suitable, and waited for replies which seldom came. I experienced once more the frustration which comes from fruitless endeavour, the despair that constant disappointment alone can bring. The demand for accommodation so exceeded the supply that owners could name almost any condition, and tenants would still be happy to accept. They asked the most personal questions before they would even consider you. Some seemed to think that going to work was a crime. "Oh, we couldn't possibly have a business woman living in our flat," one woman said. She was trying to let the rear portion of her house as a small unit. "You would have to have

your washing out on our clothesline at the weekend." Almost every one I spoke to had an aversion for a young boy, even though he was quiet and obedient and boarded at school. "But what about his holidays?" they would say.

I had been advised by all my friends not to reveal John's existence — once you were in a place, it was against the law to evict you — but when the inevitable question came, I found that I could never resist speaking the truth.

One day, just after I had had a most distressing conversation on the telephone, one of our part-time staff, Dr. Hicks, (he is now pathologist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital) came in to see me. When he heard of my situation, he said: "Try not to worry too much, Mrs. Gittins. We'll find you something. There are so many of us. Surely someone will soon hear of something, somewhere."

The mental stress I suffered during this period strengthened a conviction I had had for some time. The only course possible, if I were to stay on in this country, would be to make use of my capital to build our own house. Somewhat against the advice of Mr. Adam, who knew of the difficulties of home construction at that time, I bought a piece of land in North Balwyn, a newly developed and rapidly growing outer suburb. The Legacy Club introduced an architect and, in no time at all, plans had been drawn and submitted to the building authorities for approval.

Meanwhile Dr. Hicks had himself heard of a house, within walking distance of our land: Dr. Reid, senior lecturer in Physiology, was about to go overseas for a year and our tenancy of his house was arranged. I moved in in early December, 1947, only just in time for the school holidays. Besides being happy at the prospect of having our own home within the year, I was glad of the close proximity of Dr. Reid's house to our building site. This would make supervision of our project a relatively simple matter. Our problems appeared to be well on their way to being solved.

Dr. Reid's house was new and adequately furnished. It had three bedrooms and a garden which allowed us to have Michael and Peter, Billy's sister Mabel's sons, who were at school in Sydney, to spend their holidays with us. Our nearest

neighbours, the Clarkes, a young couple, were friendly and the pleasant shopping centre was situated close by. I was greatly relieved when Elizabeth took charge, immediately on her return from school, of the feeding of our suddenly enlarged family. This was a real help even though Mr. Stevens, the butcher, recognizing me to be a novice, had taken a special interest and helped me in many ways. He saved for me things like lamb's fry, which was not rationed, and even let me have titbits for the cat which Dr. Reid had left in my care.

Nevertheless the burden of responsibility and the strangeness of being head of the family weighed heavily on my mind. I don't think I had really known what it was to be without Billy until we lived in a house. When the gas hot water service went out of order, or the electricity failed, or even when the children broke a window just before Christmas, I did not know what to do. Fortunately the estate agent, Mr. John Fletcher, of Fletcher and Parker, who acted for Dr. Reid, was always available for advice and helped me out of many a difficulty.

Most of our problems were the result of postwar conditions and would never have occurred in normal times. Elizabeth and I thought it prudent to take advantage of Michael and Peter's assistance to lay in a stock of firewood for the winter. Mr. Fletcher gave me the name of a wood merchant and told me to order "split" box (a type of gum). When the supply was delivered, it consisted of half a ton of wood in six logs! The truck was driven into the vacant allotment next to us and the wood tipped over the fence. The children did their best but were unable even to get the axe into the logs, far less to split them. When Dr. Reid's brother saw their efforts, he spent an entire Saturday morning cutting up the wood for us.

On the allotment to our right a new house was nearing completion and, in due course, Betty and Howard Chapman moved in. We had looked forward to their coming but my interest soon turned to consternation when I saw what they had to do. For one thing, although we had electricity, gas and other services, it was to be weeks before their supplies were fully connected. During the whole of this time it seemed to me as if they lived a nightmare existence but they were themselves unperturbed. Besides putting all sorts of finishing touches to

his house, Howard Chapman toiled from morning until late at night to level his property, lay out his garden, and construct his driveway. For my part, coping with the Reids' already well established garden, weeding, watering and tending the small vegetable patch, occupied all my spare time. The sight of Howard's daily struggle in a sea of muddy clay alarmed me beyond measure. How could I possibly do all these things when the time came for us to move into our house? Was I wise to pursue a project into which I had plunged so stubbornly and seemingly without sufficient forethought? The realization of my indiscretion hit me like an avalanche. I could not bear even to think of it.

It would have been far better had I been able to refrain from thinking but doubts and fears crowded in on me. I must pull out before it was too late. Regretfully I withdrew my building application and sold the land. So rapid had been the growth of the area that, in a few short months, I was able to sell at a profit of £50 but, with the cost of architect's fees, a sum of £25 was lost on the project. It was a small enough price to pay. At last I had bowed to circumstance and was ready to admit defeat.

I wrote to "M.K." and, immediately, there came an offer of a position from Mr. Sloss, our Vice-Chancellor. He was about to set up an office for the clinical departments in the Queen Mary Hospital and, as I was thinking of returning to Hong Kong, he wanted me to take charge. This was just the thing I needed to help me reach a decision. An opportunity like this was not likely to recur for, however well disposed Mr. Sloss might feel towards me, I could not expect him to create a position each time I thought of going home. Naturally I felt bad at deserting the children, and at leaving Professor MacCallum, yet I could not afford to turn the offer aside. Arrangements were finalized for John's transfer to Geelong Grammar. Elizabeth was accepted for residence at University Women's College. I was to return to Hong Kong after the summer vacation.

Something then happened which caused a complete reversal of my plans. Going home at dusk one day, on her way from the tram, Elizabeth was accosted by a man and, although she ex-



trlicated herself from a frightening situation with creditable presence of mind, I was most unhappy about it. What alarmed me was the fact that she had run into our empty house instead of going to one of the neighbours. "Don't be absurd, Mother," she had said. "How could I make a fuss over a thing like this? In any case it was quite unnecessary. I was able to take care of myself."

They say that to know nothing is to fear nothing. Although I did not know much, I feared that a further episode might not have so happy an ending. I realized that, had I not been in Melbourne, Elizabeth would have had no one to whom she could turn. I considered this to have been a sign from Heaven which I could not afford to ignore. Elizabeth needed me more than she knew. In fact, if anything should happen to either of them whilst I was in Hong Kong, I would find it difficult to forgive myself. Travel in those days was not as easy as it is now.

Overnight I cancelled my plans for going back to Hong Kong. I could not, however, retract from the sale of my building site and the hunt for accommodation was on again. This time I had the help of John Fletcher. He found us a lovely flat in a gracious old house in Kew which in some respects reminded me of *The Falls*. Kew is a highly rated inner residential suburb. The house had been built by Judge Richardson but the present owners were Mr. and Mrs. Amson, who lived in it with their son. Our flat was at the back of the upper floor. Its rooms were spacious with high ceilings and the windows looked out on an English garden with delightful herbaceous borders and fine old trees. We were completely self-contained. We lived in it happily for almost four years.

## HONG KONG — 1950

When I joined the Department of Pathology in January, 1946, Professor MacCallum had apologized for the poor office accommodation. It was certainly nothing of which the University could feel proud. But funds were short and postwar conditions made it almost impossible to get anything done in the way of renovations or even minor alterations. As time went on, I continued to occupy the dark and dismal cubby hole which had served as an office for his secretary since 1929. The outer section, in which her assistant sat, had been planned originally as a histology laboratory because of its excellent south light. It had a wooden bench running along the full length of the room, beneath the sill of large plate glass windows. Its floor boards were rough hewn and bare of covering. There were sizable holes in the corners from which, in the quiet of the early evening, rats would emerge to feast on luncheon leftovers in the waste paper baskets. There was a total lack of amenities — we could not boast of a single toilet in the whole building.

The strange thing was that one grew accustomed to these conditions. The strong smell of formalin which hit one as soon as the front door was opened; the pots of operative and autopsy specimens lying around in the "Centre Lab"; the huge lead sinks in the preparation room, in which our teacups and saucers were washed, not in the same water but in the same bowls used for washing specimen jars; the bone-chilling cold in the winter — it is said that students sometimes attended lectures and practical classes wearing overcoats and gloves — and the general discomforts of a building, designed sixty years before for our Spartan predecessors, were accepted as an integral part of the department. One stayed, not because of the comforts it lacked but for what the department was. It was to be four

years after I joined, and only twelve months before Professor MacCallum's retirement, that some of these conditions were improved.

As the Professor approached his sixty-fifth birthday, the Council of the University of Melbourne conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Medicine, and commissioned Max Meldrum to paint his portrait. His associates and staff, under the leadership of E. S. J. King, planned to celebrate the occasion by presenting him with a volume of essays to be called "Studies in Pathology", the aim of which was "to acknowledge his influence on many generations" and "to indicate the breadth of outlook which, for over a quarter of a century, he has inculcated in the School". The production of this book was a task of such magnitude as only someone of Edgar King's ability and drive could have accomplished. We others did only what we were told to do. It was a busy time for all.

I was sad and worried at the thought of Professor MacCallum's retirement, more so because it seemed that the "heir apparent", Edgar King, did not share the Professor's opinion of me. When King's appointment was confirmed, I wondered whether it would not be more prudent for me to request a transfer to some other department. I confided my doubts and fears to the old Professor.

"Edgar King," he said, "is a fine man, very fine indeed. You will find that things will be quite different when you work for him. He had a tough time, you know, throughout the war years and his severe illness at its end, brought great disappointments to his life. But he is nothing if not fair-minded. I think that you should see him through for a year. You owe this much at least to the department. Give him half a chance and I am sure that he will learn to appreciate you."

I wasn't at all convinced. However, if Professor McCallum considered that I owed it to the department, the least I could do was to stay for the year. But I needed a holiday. Almost four years had passed since I had seen my people. I longed for a trip home.

The time seemed opportune from the children's point of view. John had settled in happily at Geelong Grammar. Besides other things, he was learning carpentry. At Christmas he had

brought home some sturdy steps, painted cream to match my kitchen. These are still in use after a period of twenty years. The next year he made himself some book shelves. The House-master, Mr. Dart, had managed to draw him out and now encouraged him to join a group of bird watchers who were allowed, in the spring of each year, to spend from Friday evenings at the You Yangs — a nearby bird sanctuary — provided that they returned to school in time for chapel on Sunday evenings.

When he came home for the school holidays, Elizabeth and I used to leave him the breakfast dishes, and the shopping list. He would get his own lunch and amuse himself in the afternoon — at times visiting his old Carey friends. A cheery fire would be lit when we came home in the evenings.

Once, when he was about thirteen, I had ordered a ton of firewood for the winter. This is usually dumped on the footpath, and I had hoped that the Amson's gardener might have been persuaded to help John put it away. When I came home there was not a sign that the wood had been delivered.

"Didn't the wood come, John?" I asked.

"Oh yes," he replied. "It's been put away. Come and have a look." I followed him into the wood shed which was set well back in the garden. He could hardly conceal his pride. The firewood had been neatly stacked in piles almost reaching the top of the shed.

"Who helped you, John?" I enquired.

"No one" was the reply. He had worked the whole afternoon and then had swept both the path leading to the shed, and the footpath outside. The next day he confessed that his back "didn't feel too good"! He had come a long way from the delicate mite who had had to leave Hong Kong because of his health.

Elizabeth was hard at work. She had accepted an assignment and strove to complete it. An exceptionally nice young man had appeared on the scene — Mrs. Webb's nephew, Stewart Doery. He was very shy, very courteous and unbelievably thoughtful. I liked him immensely.

By 1950, alterations to the department had been completed. I had now a bright room in the corner of what had previously

been the laboratory. On a winter's day I could trace the lacy patterns of the old elm tree outside my window; I enjoyed its shade during the hot summer months. The rest of the laboratory was made into a fair-sized office for junior staff. The former cubby hole became their cloakroom. Linoleum now covered the entire floor. In the academic staff room, a stainless steel sink had been installed. Other improvements were to come later. Through the almost superhuman efforts of Edgar King, "Studies in Pathology" was actually in the hands of the publishers and arrangements for its ultimate distribution were well under control. It was a good time to take advantage of the relative lull in activities to visit my people. With Professor MacCallum's approval I planned to take three months' leave. Qantas Empire Airways, as it was then known, had recently introduced a service to Japan via Hong Kong. I would go up by air and return by sea, allowing a stay of approximately ten weeks at home.

"What are you going to do with your children whilst you are away?" Bill Rose enquired of me.

I explained that John was no problem. He had made friends at school and Mr. Dart had assured me that one of them would most certainly ask him home for the holidays. "As for Elizabeth," I said, "my friends have offered to have her for short periods. I have yet to make out a roster."

"Please include us on the list," Bill said. "She must come to us for at least a fortnight."

"Hadn't you better ask Mrs. Rose before committing her to having a house guest?" I suggested.

The very next morning he greeted me with: "Margaret says she would love to have Elizabeth. In fact, she suggests that you let her make her headquarters with us, visiting your other friends at any time that they may wish to have her."

And so it was settled. This was a great load off my mind. Once again, as he had done so often in the past, big-hearted Bill Rose had helped me out of a difficulty.

My plane, a DC4, left Kingsford Smith Airport for Darwin on the evening of 28th March, 1950. The DC4 is a most comfortable and smooth flying aircraft and, after eighteen years, is still being used on Qantas's Norfolk Island run. The Sydney/

Tokyo service was, at that time, a new venture — part of a large expansion programme by which Qantas had projected itself into the field of international civil aviation. They wished to create a good impression and all passengers were treated with the solicitude which, nowadays, would be reserved for VIPs. There were only a few passengers, among whom was Mr. Angus Mitchell, President of Rotary International. He was on his way up to Japan to foster postwar friendship. He was interested to know my feelings towards Japan.

A brief technical stop at Darwin early the next morning, with breakfast at the international terminal, and we were on our way over the Arafura Sea to Labuan in North Borneo. We were taken for a drive around the island before settling in at the comfortable rest house which Qantas had built for the overnight stop.

Reaching Hong Kong on 30th March, I was met by the family and the Gittinses. Grace had left at the end of 1948, to take her daughter Shirley to school in England and I stayed with Vic and "M.K.". The close association I had had with their children was soon resumed. I visited Billy's parents frequently.

It was a wonderful holiday, every minute of which I loved. The years had softened the loss which had saddened my previous homecoming. I was ready to throw cares to the wind and indulge in the sheer joy of being home. Father had been delighted with a letter he had received from Professor MacCallum, written after my departure, telling his appreciation of me. He gave a welcoming party to which he had invited all my friends. There must have been at least two hundred present. "M.K." was approaching the height of his career. For his outstanding service in Hong Kong's rehabilitation programme, he had been knighted in 1948. Besides his own legal and other community interests, he was a member of both the Legislative and Executive Councils. He was kept busy with meeting after meeting during the day, and an incessant run of social engagements at night — to many of which the invitation had been extended to include me. Yet he gave me generously of his spare time. He loved to listen to accounts of the children's activities in Melbourne.

Mr. Sloss had retired from the University and Professor (later Sir Lindsay) Ride was now Vice-Chancellor. Ride, an Australian, had been a Victorian Rhodes Scholar and our Professor of Physiology. He was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine before Gordon King's time. As Lieutenant-Colonel he had commanded the Field Ambulance unit of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. In the early days of internment he had escaped from Shamshuipo Camp and, through the rest of the war years, had headed the British Army Aid Group (BAAG), which may be described as Hong Kong's resistance group, operating in China. He had returned to Hong Kong with the relieving forces as a Staff Colonel. He was an old friend. There were many others: the Gordon Kings; the Vice-Chancellor's Secretary, May Witchell; Jeanne Faid, my flat-mate in Stanley, now head of the Department of Mathematics; Robert Simpson, Professor of English, and a family friend of long standing; the Redmonds (Engineering); and Elaine Davis and her husband, Dave, now Professor of Geography. The University was like another home to me. "M.K." had them all to a champagne dinner on my birthday, at which were also Grace's husband, Horace; my sister Florence, and her husband, K. C. Yeo, who had become Assistant Director of Medical Services; Billy's brother, Victor; and his sister, Mabel, with her husband George Hall. Present also were Mr. Justice Williams and his wife. He had been a prisoner-of-war with Billy and was Chairman of the Hong Kong War Memorial Fund. Both he and "M.K." had thought that I should apply for assistance from the Fund for John's education. It helped me until John left school.

I attended the Annual Athletic Meeting of the University at the Pavilion where, on behalf of the children and myself, I presented to the Athletic Club, the Gittins Memorial Challenge Cup for the 440 yards event.

The University was being visited by representatives of the Inter-University Council of Higher Education. Walter Adams, brother of my friend, Lionel Adams of Melbourne, had come with Dr. Mouat Jones. I met them in the Vice-Chancellor's office. Walter Adams knew Grace in England. Introductions seemed superfluous. As I had the use of M. K. Lo's car, and

plenty of free time besides, I was given the privilege of showing Hong Kong to our visitors. I drove them around the island, visited Stanley and the Peak. *The Falls* had been cleared of loose rubble, but was still dreadfully war-scarred.

Easter Sunday was spent in the New Territories, with lunch at Mabel and George's lovely *Beach House*, situated at 11-mile Beach, on the way to Castle Peak. After lunch we continued on the sixty-mile route around the New Territories, turning inland from Castle Peak, with its long beach, and Buddhist monastery half way up the mountain, to Sheungshui. Father had a property in this district where, before the war, besides growing fruit and crops under scientific conditions, there had also been an experimental farm for poultry and pigs. Since the re-occupation, the property had been taken over by the military authorities. We called on Major Churn who was our nearest neighbour. He was delighted to see us and gave us afternoon tea. We passed the Royal Hong Kong Golf Club's links at Fanling. This 36-hole course is said to be one of the world's finest.

As we reached Taipo, we caught glimpses of the beautiful and sheltered waters of Tolo Harbour. This section of the Taipo Road, with its mountain ranges and islands rising out of a calm inland sea, is one of the most scenic of Hong Kong's many attractive drives, and hugs the coastline to within a few miles of Kowloon.

Our visitors expressed a desire to see Macao and "M.K." arranged bookings for us on one of the larger ferries that left Hong Kong each day. Situated 35 miles from Hong Kong, Macao is the oldest trading outpost of the west with China, the history of its association with Portugal dating back to 1557, although it was not until 1887 that it was ceded to Portugal as a colony. Macao's sheltered harbour, with heavy silting from the West River, cannot be compared to the mercantile facilities of Hong Kong but, during the Japanese occupation, it enjoyed for a brief spell the *entrepôt* trade that was Hong Kong's in normal times. The quaint settlement extends up a hillside and overlooks the fine, if muddy coloured, bay. We spent the afternoon exploring the old cathedral, with its historic graveyard, and the beautifully kept botanic gardens.



Macao's colourful buildings display features of both east and west. As we strolled with leisurely interest along its cobblestoned streets, I was reminded of its similarity to Lisbon, which I had noticed when Father took me to visit the Portuguese capital in 1924. As the ferry was not due to return to Hong Kong until three o'clock in the morning, we hired a car after dinner to see Macao's night life, visiting several of the many *fantan* houses, where fortunes may be made or lost in a few hours, and which give Macao its name of "Monte Carlo of the East".

There was a formal dinner at Government House, at which His Excellency asked me many questions about Australia and was greatly surprised to hear that my friends had thought me foolhardy to visit Hong Kong when conditions appeared so unsettled. The Australian press had made headline news of the disturbances and general unrest in Hong Kong consequent upon the civil war in China. His Excellency asked if I would be prepared to broadcast my impressions on my return to Melbourne. He wanted Australians to have a true picture of Hong Kong. If I would do this, he added, he would make arrangements with the Australian Broadcasting Commission to give me a suitable time.

As a comparison to what Hong Kong was like on my first visit in 1946, and of conditions prevailing at the present time, it might be of interest to take a brief look at the picture as I gave it over the national station, 3LO, in August, 1950.

I told my listeners that I found Hong Kong to be normal and stable in everyday living. Government policy relative to its neighbours tended towards an altruism which, to some extent, was against the interests of her own citizens: owing to its geographical situation and political balance in a sphere of trouble and chaos, Hong Kong had become a haven for all who had found living conditions untenable elsewhere. When Shanghai fell to the Communists in May, 1949, as did Canton later in the same year, Hong Kong had opened its doors to the refugees who, at times, had reached ten thousand in one week. From the half a million inhabitants left by the Japanese at the end of the occupation in 1945, Hong Kong's population had exceeded the pre-war figure of 1,600,000, and now approached the two million mark.

As a result of this the resources of the Colony had been strained to breaking point. I could see that housing and water shortages, always problems of some magnitude, had become desperate. A large proportion of the refugees were destitute and, in order to give shelter to their families, they had built themselves "temporary" shacks and, almost overnight, "squatters" settlements had sprung up in every conceivable spot. These shacks were flimsy and insanitary, and constituted a grave fire danger as well as a serious menace to health. The problem was later to be countered by multi-storey economy housing blocks in recognized resettlement areas—a scheme that was as humane as it was far-sighted, and reflects great credit on the local Government.

General housing difficulties were being overcome by reclamation of land, and development of hitherto rural areas, for the construction of housing and building sites; the high-rising multi-storey residential flats, sponsored by private enterprise, were to come later. The water shortage, however, remained acute. In spite of new and larger reservoirs, Hong Kong's absolute dependence on its capricious annual rainfall to fill them, makes one wonder if this problem will ever be solved.

Despite these difficulties, as was the case in the early years of the Japanese trouble prior to the second world war, the influx of people from China had brought an upsurge of initiative and capital. There was a growth and prosperity in every direction such as had never been seen before. With the overwhelming increase in population, there had come a heavy demand on consumer goods; widespread industrial development had taken place. Circumstances had therefore combined to change Hong Kong from its traditional role of a quietly successful storehouse, with small side industries, to become a growing centre of great commercial enterprise.

Here are a few extracts from my manuscript:

"I heard whispers of black markets and rents rackets—the inevitable result of supplies failing to meet the demand. In the newspapers I read of crime and of corruption, yet statistics do not show a higher percentage of these in Hong Kong than elsewhere. The police force is doing a magnificent job. The

tact and discretion with which problems have been handled, have won its members the admiration of all . . . .

Enormous sums of money have been spent on public works. The airport is one of the busiest in the world, and plans for its expansion are well under way. The magnificent natural harbour, ranking as the world's fourth largest, continues to serve ships of all nations — its eastern approaches having recently been equipped with the latest navigation aids. The roads deserve special mention. They had been left in an appalling state of disrepair by the Japanese, but timely restoration and new developments, using modern construction techniques, have combined to make them a delight to the motorist . . . .

Recent Government Ordinance had given both labour unions and employers' associations a definite legal status and the newly-formed Labour Office is constantly engaged in the conciliation of trade disputes. Strikes are not unknown, but a surplus of semi-skilled labour acts as a deterrent to hot-headed action and, as far as I was able to ascertain, there had been no hold-up of shipping on account of a lack of labour to discharge or load ships . . . .

Now that I have seen Hong Kong for myself, I am firmly of the opinion that Great Britain has no thought of sacrificing her. Nor do I see any evidence of support for the suspicion that her neighbours contemplate a forceful occupation. What effects recent events in Korea will have on Hong Kong, I do not presume to forecast. I have tried to sketch you a picture of conditions as I found them; I know that Hong Kong would welcome your understanding and support."

I had made two requests of my Father: the first was a suggestion for him to have the children up for their summer holidays at the end of the year, reminding him that he had not seen them for almost ten years. The second concerned a new car. I had traded in "Roberta" before leaving Melbourne, and had ordered a Hillman *Minx*, to be delivered when one became available. Waiting time for new cars in Australia was still many months.

Having given the matters some thought, Father sent for me. He told me that he planned to have all the family home

in 1952, for his 90th birthday. It would therefore be premature to send for my children at this stage. As regards the car, he said that much as though he would have liked to have helped me, he was very short of ready cash and could not at that time afford it. "I understand that you are very friendly with His Excellency?" (I had told him that H.E. had asked me to broadcast on my return to Australia. Father had also heard that I was due to have an informal lunch at Government House before my departure for Melbourne). "Now," he continued, "why don't you suggest to H.E. to speed up compensation for my losses incurred in the war? I would then be in a better position to help you."

"Father," I replied. "I think it is a wonderful idea for you to have all the family home to celebrate your 90th birthday. I hadn't known of your intention or I wouldn't have suggested your sending for the children now. As regards the car, if you are short of ready cash, I am quite prepared to accept your decision. But to speak to H.E. is a different matter altogether. I know that you have lost a great deal," I went on, "so have I. But so have many other people — some much more than either of us. Many will not have even the compensations which you and I have been blessed with. Speaking for myself, I have lost Billy and he is irreplaceable. What do material things matter?"

I thought that he would have been offended at my speaking to him in this manner but, instead, he told me that he admired my philosophy. At last, he said, he could understand how it was that I could be so cheerful in the face of all I had suffered!

The very next day his secretary telephoned me to say that Father had received an unexpected repayment of a loan and was therefore able to let me have the money I needed for the car. Elizabeth and John had their trip too at the end of the year. They went at the invitation of Vic and "M.K." Nor was Father in any way offended.

There had been a good deal of publicity in the press about the Imperial War Graves Commission assuming responsibility for the Yokohama British War Cemetery, and of its work in the development of the area to make it comparable with other war

cemeteries in the world. I felt a sudden overwhelming desire for a pilgrimage to this cemetery but found, on enquiry, that travel to Japan was strictly controlled, entry being restricted to traders and industrialists.

I was shocked and disappointed beyond measure but the obstacles I encountered made me all the more determined to go. When they found that I could not be dissuaded, the Department of Supply and Distribution cabled the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of Allied Power (SCAP), and permission, on compassionate grounds, was granted. "M.K." arranged for me to stay, whilst in Tokyo, at the home of Jardine's "Taipan", Mr. E. Pollock, and I left by BOAC plane at 8 a.m. on Saturday, 3rd June. At the end of a seven-hour flight I was met at Haneda airport by the Hong Kong Government Representative, Mr. W. J. Anderson, who was to be responsible for me. He put me on the plane two days later when, having accomplished my mission, I left for Hong Kong.

Mr. Anderson was an old friend. His wife had been our girl guide commissioner and he a fellow-internee in Stanley Camp. At war's end he was serving a fifteen-year gaol sentence imposed by the Japanese, for the part he was supposed to have played in the abortive mass escape of police from Stanley camp in 1943. Mr. Anderson had been in charge of the canteen and it had been alleged that it was through our provisions that messages had been sent out, and radio spare parts brought into the camp.

Attractively planned and laid out in Yuenchi Park, the British Commonwealth War Cemetery is situated in Hodogaya, six miles outside of Yokohama—a twenty-five mile run from Tokyo. I was sent by car, escorted by Mr. Roy Johnstone, of Jardine's. The cemetery was originally constructed by the Australian War Graves Group in 1945. It is the only one of its kind in Japan. The United Kingdom, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand, and Indian Forces, each occupies a separate section, with the first three having each a Cross of Sacrifice. A beautifully designed shrine holds the ashes of 332 servicemen whose remains were cremated. Their names are inscribed on the inner walls of the shrine. From the well-kept records,

Billy's grave was located easily and, only a few short yards away, was that of James Mackenzie Jack —

“and in their death they were not divided.”

The quiet dignity of the planning, the horticultural excellence of each section where native trees had been planted, the calm reflections from the pools of remembrance, and the exquisite beauty of natural features skilfully employed to create an atmosphere of peaceful repose, all contributed to give a lasting impression. I came away humbled, and filled with gratitude too, for the experience. I carried with me a realization that no one person's effort could ever approach the magnificence achieved. Moreover, the promise of diligent care in perpetuity will make the cemetery live on forever. I felt proud and happy to leave Billy there.

## I BEGIN TO TAKE ROOT

I returned to the University of Melbourne in time for the celebration marking Professor MacCallum's sixty-fifth birthday on 14th July, 1950. At a gathering in the Private Dining Room of Union House, Edgar King, on behalf of his colleagues, presented a leather-bound volume of "*Studies in Pathology*"\* to his old chief. It was a fine tribute, worthy of the master and of his following. Peter MacCallum was delighted and visibly moved. The portrait presentation by Council took place later in the year.

On his retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus. He was to become National Chairman of the Australian Red Cross Society, a full-time appointment. At the same time he would continue his chairmanship of the Executive of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria. Victorians owe the establishment of a therapeutic clinic in 1952 mainly to his generous and untiring efforts. The naming of this clinic after him is fitting tribute to his work in the cancer field. In 1953 he was knighted by the Queen.

Meanwhile Professor MacCallum's last months in the Chair of Pathology slipped by all too quickly. Of a sudden, to use his own words, he had "handed over the department, and Edgar King, to Mrs. Gittins." But Mrs. Gittins felt none too secure as the new Professor took office.

Edgar Samuel John King, holding the doctorates of Science and of Medicine, the degree of Master of Surgery, and the fellowships of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons of England and its Australasian counterpart, joined the Department of Pathology as Professor

---

\* "*Studies in Pathology*", edited by E. S. J. King, T. E. Lowe and L. B. Cox, Melbourne, at the University Press (1950).

in March, 1951. On the first day of his appointment, he asked me to join him in a tour of the department. At its end he turned, almost belligerently, to me. "I suppose I shall have to learn to tell you where I go and what I do with myself," he said. "I am not used to this sort of thing."

I couldn't help replying: "It is entirely up to you, Professor. You don't have to do it but you will find things much easier if you did."

And so we began a fifteen-year association. We were not the most ardent of friends, as you will have observed, but we worked in tacit harmony for a common purpose. Above all, we shared a common bond: our mutual affection for the "Old Prof" transcended any personal incompatibility.

"Have you had any experience in proof-reading?" Professor King began one day.

"No, Professor," I replied.

"And why not?" he asked.

"Professor MacCallum read his own proofs. There weren't many others."

Until King's succession to the Chair, we had suffered acutely from the postwar economic restraint, the annual departmental vote in 1951 being a pitiful £725. The few staff members were too occupied with teaching duties to indulge in research and, with no costly research project in action, we could not even pretend to produce the results so essential for favourable consideration when grants were allocated.

Pursuing his subject further, he continued: "The sooner you learn to do this, the better. You are going to have plenty of proofs to read."

How true his forecast! From then on departmental policy held only one meaning. It had but one purpose. We were to publish or we would perish! My excess energy was channelled from the attention formerly given to Professor MacCallum's extra-departmental activities, and was directed instead towards supplying an ever-growing band of research workers with an efficient ancillary service. It was not to be accomplished single-handed — I was encouraged to train junior staff to assist me. In the years to come, both Jessie Ling and Wendy van Baer became far more proficient than I. I spent many hours in the



Medical Library which, fortunately, was situated in our building, studying the journals and taking note of their special requirements in style. I developed a critical attitude towards our potential contributions to the literature. I aimed always to simplify the presentation of material but it was only natural, I suppose, that the suggestions were not always accepted without argument. Then, as our findings became presentable and our submissions were accepted by editors, the galley proofs came rolling in. In 1959, when I made a survey of the research work undertaken in the department since its inception, we had reached a peak production of thirty papers published in that one year. Financial resources, other than salaries, had risen to over £20,000. The entire scene had shifted.

Not only was there a metamorphosis in our interests brought about by the new Professor but the anatomy of the department soon underwent radical change. In anticipation of substantial research funds becoming available, Edgar King decided that the climate was ripe for an expansion of laboratory accommodation. But extensions to an antiquated building were impractical if not actually impossible. The only way in which we could acquire more space would be to have the gallery around the upper museum floored in. If this were done, five extra rooms could be reclaimed. He turned to the University for help.

They say that a new professor can get almost anything he asks for. Professor King proved no exception. He requested, and was granted the sum of £6,000 — a figure unheard-of in departmental history. It was referred to in hushed undertones. The large constructional undertaking would mean clearing the museum of its twelve thousand specimens. We planned to have the work carried out during the summer vacation in 1951/2 but, due to the huge national postwar building programme, steel was in extremely short supply. We had to wait indefinitely for the steel girders necessary for our project. In spite of all attempts to arrange it otherwise, we were thus forced by circumstance, to endure a major upheaval in our teaching activities during the first two terms of 1952. In fact, had it not been for the response, in the name of friendship, to

our appeal for "most favoured treatment" from a steel supplier, we would have had a much longer wait.

Professor King never spared himself, nor did he suffer any slackening of effort on the part of his staff, yet he was always the first to authorize abandonment of time-consuming manual operations in favour of labour-saving devices. Besides our annual vote, our biopsy service was our only other source of revenue. He grew increasingly impatient of the delays necessitated by manual preparation of the slides for microscopic examination; he knew that an automatic processing machine would cut preparation time by more than a half, and so produce an increased turnover. However, funds available to us could not stretch to the £800 required for the cost of the machine. Eventually he agreed to my trying to talk the Accountant into advancing us the money, to be refunded over a period of six months. Our purchase of the *Histokine* in May, 1951, heralded an era of increasingly sophisticated mechanical aids in the department. At the same time, negotiations for the loan established a rapport between the Accountant and myself, which was to be of benefit to both the Accounts Department and our own for many years to come.

Meanwhile exciting things were happening at home. In December, 1950, Elizabeth had announced her engagement to Stewart Doery and, at the completion of her studies in the University at the end of 1951, they decided to be married.

I had seen a good deal of Stewart during the past three years, and further acquaintance had strengthened my early favourable impression. The more I saw of him, the more I approved of Elizabeth's choice. In fact, had I been asked to select a son-in-law myself, out of any collection of young men of my acquaintance, I could not have bettered her effort. Moreover, I had met his parents and a friendship, born of mutual respect, had been firmly established.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Doery lived in Westmere, in the Western District of Victoria. Like the Joneses, they owned a sheep property. Muriel Doery had come from Edinburgh, where Frank had met her while serving with the Australian Imperial Forces during the first world war.

On leaving school Stewart had come to live with his aunt



*A family group  
1950*



*With Grandfather*



*Elizabeth's wedding day  
February, 1952*



*John's wedding day April, 1963*

in Melbourne and, after his discharge from the RAAF, he had entered his Uncle Harry Doery's business. Uncle Harry and his partner owned a clothing factory. They were specialists in the manufacture of men's suits.

The young couple were married on 29th February, 1952. My letter to the family, dated 1st March, describes the wedding in some detail. This is what I said:

" . . . The days before the wedding were a succession of delightful visits from friends, and answering calls from messengers, the postman and telegraph boys. It was all most exciting and I am glad to say that, at no time was I disturbed by that feeling of panic, as when things get beyond you. With the assistance of our friends, all was under control.

On Thursday, 28th, John came home from school. By this time I was all but purring: we were confident that, on the morrow, the sun would shine.

Friday dawned cloudy, with that morning mist which, in Melbourne, promises a perfect day. Rosalind Bain and her mother had kindly undertaken to decorate the church. There was little else left to be done.

We dressed at *Varndean*, the home of the Lionel Adamses. When the photographer arrived at 3.30 p.m. we were all ready. Elizabeth looked lovely in her gown of ivory coloured Chinese tribute satin, and the bridesmaids, Jeannie Jones and Julie Adams, in their dresses of nylon net of a pale chartreuse colour, added a touch of character and charm. Elizabeth carried a bouquet of tuberose and tree lily-of-the-valley. The bridesmaids had posies of hydrangea in a background of ivy leaves. We could not have had a more perfect setting. The glorious sunshine heightened the light and shade of the Adams's garden, evidence of which you will see in the photographs.

All was ready at Scots Church in Collins Street, in the city. The communion table was decorated with white gladioli, chrysanthemum and hydrangea; white satin ribbon tied sprigs of orange blossom from the Bain's garden to the pews. The church was a credit to the morning's effort. As the organ played Lohengrin's first notes, everyone half

turned to watch Elizabeth, attended by her bridesmaids, walk up the long aisle on the arm of Dr. W. McI. Rose. I thought: if it had been Billy, how pleased and proud he would have been . . . .

The service was conducted by the Reverend James George. We sang the twenty-third Psalm; the Minister read Chapter 13, I. Corinthians; and then the Hymn "O Perfect Love" . . . .

Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*, and we followed a radiantly happy couple down the aisle: Best Man (Geoff Backhouse) with Jeannie Jones; Groomsman (Stewart's brother, Derek) with Julie Adams; Mr. Doery and I; Mrs. Doery with John; and lastly, Mr. John Adam and Dr. Rose.

The Hotel Windsor had set aside its private reception room for our party and an informal supper allowed us to move freely among our guests. I would not have believed it possible that a mother of the bride could have felt so relaxed and carefree. When supper had ended Lionel Adams took over as Master of Ceremony for the more formal toasts and speeches.

After "The Queen", Mr. John Adam was asked to toast "Bride and Groom", which he gave in his usual inimitable manner and to which Stewart replied. John expressed my thanks in answer to Mr. Webb's speech for "The Parents". Frank Doery's reply introduced "Our Guests". Nor were you forgotten on this happy occasion. "Home Sweet Home" was played on the piano and Norman Jones did justice to "Our Absent Relatives and Friends" . . . .

There is no need for me to say how very much I missed you or how my thoughts were with you all. Through Father's generosity, your loving thoughts and the support given by our friends, Elizabeth and Stewart have had a grand beginning. The 29th February, 1952, will be a day to be remembered, and one upon which we shall always look back with pride and happiness. To you and to all our friends I send our greetings and tender my heart-felt thanks."

Lionel and Molly were soon to visit Hong Kong on their way to the United Kingdom. We sent with them the top tier of the wedding cake. Elizabeth and Stewart spent their honeymoon in Hobart and returned to Melbourne to the further excitement of buying a house. It was to be three months before they could move in. Meanwhile, the large flat in Kew held us more than adequately.

Elizabeth graduated Bachelor of Science on 5th April, 1952. The degree ceremony was held in the Union Theatre; Wilson Hall having been destroyed by fire during one of our heat-waves earlier in the year.

Elizabeth's decision to be married had signalled for me a search for alternative accommodation. Just at that time self-ownership flats were being introduced into Melbourne and it seemed to me that this would provide a perfect solution to my problems. A flat which I owned would give me permanency without the responsibilities which a house carried. Furthermore I was getting thoroughly tired of living a nomad's existence.

"What do you know of 'own-your-own' flats, Bill? Are they a good idea?" I asked Bill Rose one day.

"They're a very good idea for elderly people. It should be just the thing for you when Elizabeth gets married. There's nothing much I don't know about them — I went into the whole question on behalf of my parents. Have you any particular one in mind?"

I told him that I had seen only the ones advertised in Elwood but I understood there were others.

Bill made a face. "You can do much better than Elwood," he said. "There are some very nice ones going up on St. Kilda Road, although it will be some time before they are ready for occupation. The smaller flats at the back of the building are quite inexpensive, considering their locality, and they have the advantage of facing Fawkner Park. The agents are in the city. You should go and see them before all the flats are sold."

I saw the agents and, in no time at all, had placed a deposit on one of the two remaining flats whilst Weigall and Crowther investigated the legal ramifications concerning articles of association. With typical Scottish caution, Mr. John Adam did not

feel entirely happy about so radical a departure from normal home ownership. "The bricks and mortar cannot be claimed if anything went wrong," he said; but when he saw that I had set my heart on the scheme, he gave it qualified support. "You must remember that it is, after all, a speculation," he said, "although it may not be a very risky one. Don't blame us too much if it doesn't turn out to be a success!"

Meanwhile Father had not forgotten his promise although, in July, 1952, he had written to say that, because of the Korean situation, he had decided to call off the celebrations for his birthday. However, by August he had changed his mind and invitations had been sent to all of us: if we were willing to risk the political situation, he wrote, he would like us to return to Hong Kong in December for a "quiet" family gathering.

During the post-war years the family had scattered far and wide. He suggested that we should let him know how we wished to travel: he would make it possible for everyone, including the families of the grandchildren who had married overseas, to join those at home. When December came we gathered from three continents like a geographical parade.

From England came Grace and her daughter Shirley, who was studying dentistry at the University of London, where Vic's daughter Vera's husband, Hui Yiu Kan, was a chemistry student. He came with Vera and their baby son Geoffrey. Vic's son, Tak Shing, and Florence's Richard, arrived from King's College at Taunton, Somerset. Tak Shing was later to study law at Oxford and Richard, medicine at Cambridge.

From America (New York) came Eddie's schoolgirl daughters Tony and Mary, also Robbie's son Bobby, who was studying journalism. Vic's eldest daughter, Phoebe, and her husband, Howard Brown, having graduated Masters of Science in the University of California, brought their infant children, Brian and Cassie. Rita was the only one of Vic's children living at home. She was studying medicine in the University of Hong Kong.

I left Australia on 17th December, to be followed a few days later by Elizabeth, John and Stewart.

Robbie and Hesta flew over from Taipeh to join young Bobby, who had just returned, and Margaret who had been



left at *Idlewild*. Robbie was now a Lieutenant-General. After the war he had been in Japan with the occupation forces and was later to live in Washington as military adviser to China's representatives on the United Nations. Also living at *Idlewild* were Eddie, Eva and Irene, with her daughter Junie. Eddie was a member of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange; Eva had a busy medical practice in the city; and Irene held a senior appointment in the Government Education Department. Florence and her husband, "K.C.", who had become Director of Medical Services, lived on the Peak with their daughters, Daphne and Wendy (now joined by their son Richard). Grace and Shirley went to Tytam to be with Horace. As first magistrate, Horace sat daily in the Kowloon Magistracy. My children and I stayed with Vic and "M.K." and their family in the house *Nettlewood*, situated above and almost within sight of, the terraced back garden of *Idlewild*.

The celebrations began with a dinner at a Chinese restaurant, given by "M.K." and Vic, for the families from overseas to meet their friends. The weather on 22nd December was typical of Hong Kong's winter — a cool day with brilliant sunshine. Traditional customs were observed. The outside of *Idlewild* had been decorated with fresh flowers and bunting, and fairy lights outlined its shape at night. On the walls of the reception rooms and corridors hung congratulatory silk scrolls, sent by Father's many friends. From early morning and throughout the day, callers came to pay their respects and to wish Father many more years of good health and happiness. Their arrival and departure were heralded by hired instrumentalists, who were installed at the main entrance. They played appropriate tunes at each movement of the callers — a warning for us to be on the alert inside.

The grandsons and grandsons-in-law, including Stewart, assisted as ushers; Father was, understandably unable to be present all the time to receive his callers, but one of the sons would always be on hand to take his place. After offering their good wishes, or in Father's absence, bowing to the large scroll with the Chinese character "Longevity", representing him, guests would be entertained to tea and "long-life" noodles, and artificially coloured yeast buns made into the shape of peaches, also

indicative of long life. Stewart, who had never before seen anything like this, was absolutely fascinated by all facets of the ceremonial. He was very interested in the brushwork calligraphy, used for the Chinese signatures in the visitors' book, and particularly impressed with the spectacular fire-crackers. Unlike the single crackers — or even the small rockets — offered for sale in Australia on Guy Fawkes Day, the length of the strings of fireworks, the deafening noise they emitted at each successive explosion, the bangs, punctuated by bursts of sparkling fiery sprays, and pictorial characters, left him speechless with amazement. When Father noticed his open-mouthed interest, he asked for more to be fired for Stewart's special benefit.

The memorable day ended with a dinner held at a Chinese hotel in the city. Large though *Idlewild* was, there were too many to be accommodated there.

There were group photographs to commemorate the occasion; and each member of the family, as well as relatives and friends, received a small gold token, struck in the shape of a peach, with the 90-year span (1862-1952) engraved on one side and the Chinese character "Longevity" on the obverse. Father was like a child with his presents. Vic had sent their greetings in the traditional red lacquered boxes, held in large red string bags, and suitably escorted, early in the morning. The boxes were filled with fresh and tinned fruit, noodles, yeast buns, and all manner of good things. Their gift was a dark blue Chinese satin gown for Father, with a short black jacket. I can't remember what the others sent; we gave him an Australian sheepskin, which pleased him very much. He repeatedly stroked its soft texture, remarking that he should place it across his knees instead of on the floor. He felt that walking on it would soil its snowy whiteness. I have the rug now. After Father's death in 1956 Hesta returned it to me. He had had it in his room. It was in perfect condition.

The days which followed were filled with a deep and satisfying happiness to which was added the goodwill of a Christmas season. How can my pen do justice to the joy of reunion after long years of separation — I hadn't seen some of the others for almost fifteen years — a joy coupled with the poignancy of a gathering made incomplete by the ravages of war? There

were gaps which could never be filled; yet I would be unnatural indeed not to have enjoyed basking in the warmth of the love and companionship that were showered on the children and me. As in pre-war times Christmas Day was celebrated by dinners at *Idlewild* and at the Gittinses. Billy's parents, already looking forward to their own Diamond Wedding anniversary in a year's time, were particularly happy to have the children with them for Christmas.

I attended a special conferring of medical degrees at the University and, on Boxing Day, Professor Ride entertained us to lunch at the Vice-Chancellor's new Lodge. He was anxious to show me the trophies from the University of Melbourne which I had been able to replace for him, the originals having been lost in the war. These now adorned his new study. An old cannon stood in the grounds of the Lodge, salvaged when the building site was being prepared. It was a relic from the early days of British occupation.

On New Year's Day, 1953, we were guests of Mr. and Mrs. John Keswick of Jardine's, at a Race Meeting in the Hong Kong (later Royal Hong Kong) Jockey Club. Racing has long been one of Hong Kong's main social as well as sporting activities and I had attended meetings on earlier visits; but it was a new experience for the children. The Hong Kong Jockey Club's course ranks among the world's best; its hospitality is a household word. The Keswicks had a private suite near the mounting paddock, complete with kitchen, bar and waiters. Champagne was served with luncheon. We had our first taste of Scottish haggis.

Robbie and Hesta gave a dance at *Idlewild* for the young people. This was another happy occasion, made happier for me by being at the receiving end of one of Robbie's rare compliments. Robbie was a man of action rather than of words. "Do you know, Jean," he said, "when your children were young, I used to think that they were models of good behaviour, and now, your Stewart is the pick of the younger generation. How do you do it?" I would not have been human had I not blushed with pride and pleasure at his unstinted praise.

Florence and "K.C." were at home at a lunch party to the family. Their house, a residence for senior civil servants, had

been built shortly before the war by the then Deputy Director of Public Works, Mr. Pegg, who had been my neighbour in Stanley Camp. It has a most commanding situation on Mount Cameron with a magnificent view of the harbour. From its southern aspect one could look far out into the South China Sea. Yet the vision I carried away was not of the view but of Eddie riding Horace's motor cycle in the garden. After losing his legs in a bombing raid during the war, Eddie had had artificial limbs fitted in London. He bore a good deal of pain with true stoicism but thanks to his indomitable spirit he was not utterly handicapped physically. He could manage to do most things, including driving a car, and dance. I still think that riding a motor cycle was carrying things a little far. With all the youngsters around him, he couldn't help showing off. I really couldn't blame him.

The days slipped by. The young people were on a hike and those of our generation who were free were at Tytam. We had lunched with Grace and Horace and were now relaxed on their tennis lawn, enjoying the glorious December sunshine, completely happy and at ease. But — was this true? Uneasy thoughts of Melbourne penetrated my consciousness. I suddenly wondered whether I was justified in casting aside all this. I voiced my feelings aloud.

"Why don't you try staying in Hong Kong instead?" Grace asked. "Surely you have made a martyr of yourself for long enough?"

"I mightn't be happy here either," I replied. "I suspect that it is I, and not my surroundings, that make me so unhappy at times. I used to say that it was impossible to transplant a fully grown tree and expect it to take root in a foreign country. I am not so sure now. I think that if one could but make the effort, it is only a question of time."

"But you would never know whether or not you would feel better in Hong Kong until you gave it a try." Grace pursued her point. "You could always go back to Melbourne later if it didn't work."

"I agree that it would be the logical thing to do," I said. "But I would lose my job. I couldn't expect Professor King to wait for the experiment."



*Gathered for Father's 90th birthday*



*Hesta and Robbie*



*Vic  
in traditional gown*

*"M.K."*



"Does it matter so much? You could always get another." Obviously Grace was not going to be put off so easily.

I was strongly tempted to say that I would stay, especially as Grace was staying but, instead, I explained: "I wouldn't get one with comparable responsibility. Nor would I find another niche into which I could fit so nicely. I am sure the place does not exist — except in the Pathology Department — where I would have so much 'say' in policy matters."

I wasn't aware that I had said anything funny but Hesta was highly amused. "How like Robbie and your Father you are, Jean," she said laughingly. "You Ho Tungs are never happy unless you are holding the reins!"

This was a little unfair. The truth is that we give of our best and we appreciate being appreciated. And why shouldn't Robbie and I be like Father? After all, we are chips from the same block.

Elizabeth and Stewart went home in mid-January. John and I were to stay an extra week. John had sat his School Leaving Certificate examination at the end of 1952. News now came through by cable that he had passed in seven subjects. This was a most creditable performance and showed how well he had settled in at Geelong Grammar. In view of this success the family pressed him to stay for a further week. He deserved it and on his return to school he was awarded his House Colours for work.

Two days before my departure, Eddie had some news for us. "What do you know?" he said mysteriously. "A little bird has told me that the Peak house is at last to be restored."

This was news indeed. Eleven years had passed since the house had been damaged by war and wrecked by looters — seven of them in the period after Hong Kong had been re-occupied. "It is high time that something was done," I said. "I wonder why he (Father) has said nothing about it? I wish we could have a look at the plans."

"Not a hope," Eddie said. "Everything is very hush-hush. He doesn't want any interference, he says. I understand that it is to be turned into flats. This is as far as I know."

Nothing daunted, I telephoned to ask Father if he would allow me to study the plans. He was very reluctant to do this

but, when he realized that I would soon be out of the way, he relented. He stipulated that I was not to interfere because the plans had already been completed by the architects, Palmer and Turner, who had been responsible for the original design of the house. The contract had been let.

He arranged for an appointment for me to see the drawings but, because of my imminent departure, Mr. Smart, the architect concerned was not able to be present. I had a good look anyway. The house was to be divided into four flats. Cost was no object. It was a reasonable division but I felt that the best use had not been made of the potentials of the house, in particular the two rooms in the tower block. I spent my last evening putting my thoughts to paper. My main suggestion was that, instead of pushing the two tower rooms in with two of the four flats, these two rooms, each having been equipped originally with separate bathrooms and kitchenette, could be made with very little structural alteration into two small self-contained units, giving a total of six flats of varying sizes.

I handed Father my suggestions with some hesitation when I called to say "Goodbye". He warned that he had no intention of changing the plans but promised to look at what I had to say. Soon after I arrived back in Melbourne I received a letter from him: he had sent my notes to Mr. Smart who had been delighted with the suggestions and had accordingly adopted most of my ideas.

One further mission remained. Each time I had returned to Hong Kong, I had seen Serge Hohlov, one of the two Russian students who had been selected to stay with me in the early days of the Japanese occupation. Because of a lack of financial support — communication with his parents in Manchuria having been severed — he had been unable to complete his engineering studies when the University had resumed teaching in 1946. Serge had told me then that he would like to find employment in some electrical engineering firm and I had spoken of him to Mr. Miskin, of Gilman and Company, who had taken over some of our (William C. Jack's) agencies. Fortunately for Serge, another good friend, Paul Reveley, a Chartered Electrical Engineer, had joined Gilman's at that time,



to be Manager of their Engineering Department. Paul had taken Serge under his wing.

With all the family commitments on this short visit, I hadn't been able to find an opportunity to see Serge. And then, just before I was to leave, I visited his friend, Perry Tcheng, who had married one of my cousins. I heard from Perry that Serge was gravely ill in hospital.

Whilst I studied the plans of *The Falls*, I sent Vic's Rita, who was a medical student, to investigate the true situation regarding Serge. Rita came back with a report that he was ill with tuberculosis. He was not expected to live.

I went post-haste to see him. To my surprise he did not look like someone who was dying of tuberculosis. In fact, he looked quite normal and was not at all wasted. He told me that he had had several thoracoplasties (removal of a rib to cause collapse of the lung), and a lobectomy (excision of a lobe of the lung) had recently been attempted. Since then he had received no treatment. It appeared that nothing further could be done. I told him that I did not know what I could do, but promised to do my best to help him.

I saw Paul Reveley and found that both he and the Directors of Gilman's were anxious to spare no expense to help Serge but, they too, did not know what to do. I found also that the Company's doctor, Tony Dawson Grove, who had treated Serge before he was sent to hospital, was holidaying in Australia. Tony was well-known to me. He had been our doctor and had been responsible for sending John away before the war. I determined to seek Tony out in Australia.

On my return to the department Professor King was genuinely pleased to see me. He had told Mrs. King that I might not be coming back and she had said: "I told you that she would leave you if you didn't make her feel more needed!" But I was back, and all was well.

Professor King told me that he had had some arguments with the Accounts Department. "You had better go and make your peace with them," he said. "I told them that they could keep their questions until your return. The Accountant even had the check to tell me that he could not accept my word for



## MY ROOTS STRENGTHEN

The year 1953 had hardly been born when I made the decision to return to Melbourne. We had had a most wonderful family reunion. It was not easy to turn my back on all the love and companionship which I held so dear, and my choice had been made more difficult by Professor King's apparent indifference. Perhaps it was because he had been aware of my occasional unrest. Whatever the reason, he had made it quite clear before I left Melbourne that I should plan my future with no thought for him or the department: I was to feel entirely free to do exactly as my own inclinations dictated. This was quite typical of the man. His pride would not allow him to give the slightest indication of his need of me; his generosity forced him to make it easy for me to consider only myself.

Hong Kong's appeal had been strengthened by Grace's decision not to return to England as well as by a realization on my part that my presence in Australia was no longer essential to the children's welfare. They had done without me when they were much younger, and when war-time conditions had not allowed of any communication. There was certainly no reason why, with Elizabeth happily married and with John, though young, so sensible and independent, they could not do without me now. Furthermore, I now had Stewart. Instead of losing Elizabeth when she was married, Stewart had entered wholeheartedly into our family circle. He would be on the spot to guide or assist John should such a need arise at any time.

When, then, did I elect to return to Melbourne? It is a question to which I can give no answer. Something quite indefinable had drawn me and when, on my return, I found that I had in fact been missed, I was glad that I had come.

I stayed with Stewart and Elizabeth until my flat was ready. They lived in North Balwyn — not far from where we were to have built our house — and, having lived in the district previously, it was pleasant to renew the acquaintance of former associates. In June, 1953, I moved into my own flat in St. Kilda Road. *Sheridan Close* is a three-storeyed block made up of seventy-two flats situated on one of Melbourne's arterial highways, a highway made beautiful by a double avenue of fine trees. Two old houses with spacious grounds had been demolished to make way for the flats which had been built around the perimeter of a rectangular courtyard, in which a garden was to be made. The flats were raised on concrete pillars, giving space for covered car ports. The front of each flat had an external facing; all the kitchens looked out on the inner court. Mine was a small, single-bedroomed flat sandwiched between the lower and upper storeys, thereby giving height without being exposed to the stifling heat of the summer months. Situated on the back of the rectangular block, I looked through the window to a vista of trees framing the grassland of Fawcner Park. The windows of both lounge and bedroom were large and low-silled, giving light and an impression of spaciousness. Avenues of plane trees and elms, eucalyptus, and a variety of conifers crossed the park at all angles and in all directions. There was a scraggy looking pine outside the window of my lounge. Immediately adjacent were two fine elms which gave me shade and coolness in the summer but in no way obstructed my light or view. The graceful splendour of a weeping oak adorned the park some fifty yards away. In the early mornings and at dusk, I would hear the tuneful notes of the blackbird come in through the kitchen window; tame possums and kookaburras inhabited the nearby elms. Red robins were no strangers in the park. They came often in early winter to escape the cold of the hills. Sometimes I would spot a tiny blue wren. When all was quiet I could imagine myself in some country haven: the expanse of green parkland was broken only by the spire of Christ Church, rising gracefully above the silhouette of trees. On a Sunday its bells would chime across the park, summoning worshippers to prayer.

We were less than two miles from the centre of the city. The straight run to the University was only a further mile to the north. A mere twenty minutes by car landed me in the department. I could not be better situated.

In the department constructional work in the museum had almost been completed. We now had five extra rooms and the floor of the museum itself, as well as that across the former gallery, had been sanded and polished and new linoleum laid along the passages. Research workers were about to occupy the new rooms. The exhibits in the museum had of necessity been neglected during the shortages of the war years. The next step was to renovate them and remount them in new perspex containers, now being made in the department. Fresh labels had to be typed. Even though the work was shared by the entire staff, including the Professor, there were not enough hours in the day for all that had to be done.

Meanwhile I had traced Dr. Dawson Grove. Tony and his wife Diana were enjoying a golfing holiday only thirty miles out of Melbourne. When I asked him about Serge Hohlov, Tony reiterated his firm opinion that Serge could and should be treated by surgery. Through Professor King's interest and kindness a consultation was arranged with our thoracic surgeon, Mr. John Hayward. It was decided that if, on Dr. Dawson Grove's return to Hong Kong, he found Serge to be still operable, Mr. Hayward would operate. Serge arrived in Melbourne in June, 1953, and was at once hospitalized.

There were tests, and X-rays and examinations, followed by six weeks of chemotherapy during which Serge lived in complete isolation from other patients and the rest of the hospital staff. All Mr. Hayward asked of me was that I should visit his patient each day.

The critical operation was performed. Its success was not to be achieved without incident. It was an heroic battle. On the one side we had the skill of a most remarkable surgeon, coupled with the spirit of one who refused to accept defeat. On the other there was a devastating disease made more deadly by post-operative complications. Skill and spirit won the day. Nor did it end there. Mr. Hayward supported his patient over long months of convalescence, encouraged him through the

vicissitudes of rehabilitation and blighted hope. Throughout it all Serge quietly maintained the courage and endurance for which his nation is noted and admired. My own small contribution was the daily visits on which Mr. Hayward had laid such stress.

During these months I told Serge a good deal about the department which was claiming, with each passing day, my increased attention and interest. I confided to him some of my problems of accountancy which had become a major consideration. I was surprised to find him able to follow my monologues, and to contribute helpful suggestions in modern business technique of which, without previous training, I was in complete ignorance. I was as yet rather inclined to regard him as a young student, failing to appreciate that in his struggle for survival during the war years, he had broadened and matured in experience and knowledge.

Although he was of a retiring nature I managed sometimes to get him to talk about his early life. He told me that he had been born Sergei Victorovich, son of Victor Sergeivich, grandson of Sergei Victorovich. It was customary for old Russian families to alternate the names of father and son; it being important that all should know who was the son of whom. His father, he said, was "from a good family"; his mother was of more ordinary stock. He deemed it necessary that I should know he made no claim to full-blooded aristocracy: Russians are like that, extremely class conscious.

It appeared that the Hohlovs were a naval family but World War I had broken out and his father, impatient to be in the war, had cast aside tradition and had joined the army instead. He was commissioned and was with the Czarist troops in the great withdrawal across Russia and Siberia which took several years.

His mother had been with the nursing detachment. They met and were married. Sergei was their only child. He was born in Nicholsk-Ussurisk, in Far East Russia, a town held by the White Army until 1924.

The family had reached Manchuria. The Revolution was over and a new life had begun. "Father was good at figures," he said, "and had a fine brain." He was away from home a

good deal. He became chief accountant of a large railway organization in Manchuria and later, from 1935, was Head of the Bureau of Russian Emigrants situated at the Moulin Coal Mines.

It was therefore left almost entirely to his mother to bring up the young Sergei. She influenced him intensely and there grew between mother and son a deep and abiding attachment which a thirty-year separation was not to weaken one iota.

His mother was a most remarkable woman. A voracious reader, she taught him a love of books. He possessed a retentive memory and, until recent years, he had read widely. An ardent naturalist herself, his mother had inspired in him a love for nature — a trait which he was shy to reveal. She encouraged hobbies like carpentry and wood carving and taught him to cook and to sew — or he merely picked up these accomplishments through being her constant companion when he was not attending school.

At school Serge “just managed” to pass his examinations. He played baseball and basketball and was a good gymnast. He swam the Sungari River in the summer and skated on it during the winter months. The Sungari River at Harbin, where the family lived, was a mile across. He graduated *cum laude* from the Young Men’s Christian Association High School on 30th December, 1937, and was sent to Hong Kong to further his studies. He matriculated in the University of Hong Kong in early 1939, entered the Faculty of Engineering to major in Electrical Engineering and, after a brief visit home to Manchuria, took up residence in Lugard Hall, one of the University’s hostels. This is how he came to be selected by the Chief Warden to be with me during the early days of Japanese occupation of Hong Kong.

Serge was discharged from hospital on 6th March, 1954 — I remember this date quite clearly because it happened to be the anniversary of Billy’s death nine years before — when he virtually walked into my life. He was to remain in Australia for several months and then, if he were well enough, he would return to Hong Kong.

At that time in the department we had some four thousand transparencies of pathological conditions which had been copied

from Professor King's collection of lantern slides at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. These had been coded according to the disease index but there remained a system of filing to be devised for easy reference before they could be used and no one appeared to have the time to do it. I suggested to Professor King that we might let Serge tackle the job. It would give him something to occupy his waiting time. This was agreed to and, under the direction of Associate-Professor George Christie, Serge worked out a punch-card/colour system which has continued to be effective ever since. It was a colossal task but he was a fast and systematic worker. He was grateful for the occupational therapy; we were more than thankful to have the transparencies filed and available for teaching purposes.

By June Serge was well on the road to a good recovery. He longed for the day when he could return to Hong Kong to demonstrate to Gilman's, who had been responsible for the expenses of his treatment, his appreciation and gratitude.

Meanwhile work in the museum was moving steadily forward. Unfortunately we soon found that, in our attempt to gain the extra laboratory accommodation, we had sacrificed the natural lighting which, through the former open gallery, the large skylights had given to the main section. Despite the effort we now expended, student interest rapidly declined and, except for specific instruction in tutorial classes, they spent their spare time in the newer and more attractive sections in the hospital departments. Somehow or other our facilities would have to be improved.

Commercial display cases are often fitted with internal fluorescent lighting and we arranged for a temporary fitting in one of our cases to gauge its effectiveness. The lighting certainly added to the clarity of the exhibits but the imperfections in the sixty-year-old case, though built of good quality imported yellow pine, were immediately shown up. It was obvious that if we were to go to the expense of installing fluorescent lighting, the cases themselves would need to undergo extensive painting and repair work. The estimated cost per case amounted to £200 and a total of over £3000 would be required to have even the principal cases illuminated. We could not ask the University for more money; our only alterna-



tive was to bear the project in mind and have the cases done, probably one at a time, as our savings permitted.

How could we raise more money? The answer came in various ways. We conducted appeals, invited subscriptions, members of the staff, friends of the department, and outside organizations all participated. Within three years most of the cases had been renovated. The fittings of the last case were donated by the installation engineers, The Neon Electric Signs Limited.

Meanwhile following his good results in his School Leaving Certificate, John was set six subjects to prepare for the examination for admission to matriculation at the end of the year. Four subjects, including English expression, which is compulsory, is sufficient for a pass in the University of Melbourne. Many do five subjects, but only the best students — mainly second-year matriculants — attempt six. John's subjects were English expression, English literature, physics, chemistry, and pure and applied mathematics. From what I knew of his ability and nature, I realized that he had been set far too heavy a task. Even Professor King, who had brilliant children, and who was of the opinion that hard work never killed anyone, was surprised. Unfortunately Mr. Dart the Housemaster who knew and understood John, was on extended sick leave and his replacement considered that the work was well within John's capabilities.

For the first time in his life, John came home with an unsatisfactory report at the end of first term. The consensus of opinion was that he was "sitting on his laurels", thinking that he didn't have to work. What the masters failed to understand was John's peculiar brand of passive resistance: he would not work because he did not know where to begin and he was too reticent to seek guidance. His interest turned to other things.

"Do you know of a good printer, Mummie?" John asked one day soon after I had moved into *Sheridan Close*. He had come home for a long weekend.

I pricked up my ears. This was something I was not expecting to hear from John, "I might," I replied. "The

Melbourne University Press is considered quite good. What do you want printed?"

"Some photos of birds. The reproduction has to be good and the cost not too high."

I was naturally very much interested. At last I was on familiar ground and could possibly be of assistance. It appeared that there was a fund at Geelong Grammar, available for the publication, from time to time, of the activities of the A. F. Austin Natural History Society. Preparations were being made for the next issue. John's contribution was to be a short article and two photographs.

John's interest in bird watching and photography had developed when, on my return from Hong Kong in 1950, I had brought a small camera (Voigtlander *Baby Bessa*) which the Lo family had given him. There was not much in the way of sophisticated photographic equipment in those days — John and his friends didn't own a telephoto lens between them and I doubt that one could have been fitted to his little Voigtlander if they had. It was an interesting pastime though. The boys would look for a nest and, having found one, either in some tall eucalyptus or in bush or scrub, would fix their camera by some ingenious device. Then, hiding in a nearby spot with a long string and longer patience, would wait for the right moment to trigger off the camera by remote control. These early photographs are among some of the best in his collection.

But his poor performance at his studies had not escaped the notice of Dr. Darling, the Headmaster. John was allowed to drop English literature and to do general mathematics instead of pure and applied mathematics. Unfortunately this came too late to be of material benefit as his first term had virtually been wasted. As it happened this was of no great consequence because he had decided to make Forestry his career and had gained selection for a scholarship to the Forestry School in Creswick. I understand that he acquitted himself remarkably well at the personal interview conducted by the Board of Examiners — a Board which included senior members of the University staff.

He entered the Victorian School of Forestry as a government trainee early in 1954. It was envisaged that he should

do a combined diploma/degree course — three years at Creswick for his diploma, two years of field work and a further two years at the University for a bachelor's degree.

John's work on the memorial brochure at Geelong Grammar began a period of rather productive writing\* on the part of a schoolboy. Between 1954 and 1958, in addition to his contribution to the school Record, he had two papers published in *Walkabout*, an Australian Geographical Magazine, and one in the Journal of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. During the past decade he has maintained an interest in photography but the writing has been neglected. I am truly delighted to see his recent return to the academic field in a project on aerial photography for a Master's degree in Forestry Science.

---

\* "Strangers nest at the You Yangs", *Walkabout*, 20, 3:32 (1954).

"Our local hawks", Geelong Grammar School *Garrard Memorial Record*, 1955, page 16 (1955).

"Victoria's Catherine River", *Vict. Nat.*, 73, 35 (1956).

"A satin bower-bird comes visiting", *Walkabout*, 24, 7:25 (1958).

## I CHANGE MY STATUS

"Come off that window ledge!" "Get down at once!" The voices were peremptory and excited. I looked down. Yes, they were calling out to me from the park. It was the elderly couple next door. With a sigh I climbed into my flat. I leaned out of the window and waved to show that there was no ill feeling.

I had been in *Sheridan Close* for just over three months. It was Sunday and winter had suddenly turned into spring. A heavy dew had that morning replaced the frost which, only a few days before, had covered Fawkner Park. It had lain glistening in the slanting rays of late September sunshine. A delicate film of tender green mantled the tree tops, transforming the entire park into a veritable fairyland.

With the proximity of the elm trees outside my bedroom window I had observed with increasing interest the daily swelling of their leaf-buds, wondering just when they would burst into foliage. They must have been softened by the moisture-laden atmosphere in the night and fanned into life by the warm and gentle morning breeze. The change in the park was as delightful as it had been sudden; but my windows were weather-stained and dulled by frequent winter fogs. I must wash them immediately. It was too lovely a picture to be obscured.

Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Melville had been in Australia for over thirty years. She had come from Carnoustie, Angus, in the heart of Scotland's golf country. He was a native of Kirkaldy, in nearby Fifeshire. He had headed the Michael Nairn organization in Australia, having been known among business associates as "the Lino King". He was now retired. The couple had been enjoying a quiet stroll in the park when the sight of me on the outside ledge of my window had roused

their consternation. In no uncertain terms they had put an end to my acrobatics.

Like myself, the Melvilles had been foundation members of *Sheridan Close*. My first meeting with them, before either of us had moved in to live, had been somewhat embarrassing for me. I had slipped down one day from the department during our lunch hour, with my assistant Jessie Ling in tow. Jessie possessed to a marked degree the natural curiosity of her generation. Whilst I was busy taking some measurements, and before I had realized that she was no longer with me, she had wandered into the flat next door. She was engaged in a voyage of exploration when Mr. and Mrs. Melville had walked in! Instead of being thoroughly indignant at the intrusion when I called to apologize, they had invited us to look over their flat.

They now knocked at my door as they came up from the park. They wished to enlarge upon the folly of my risky escapade especially, they said, as there was no need for it: a man came around regularly to clean the windows.

"But I am never at home during the week," I remarked, "and nobody works at weekends in this country. I couldn't leave my flat open all the morning, waiting for a window cleaner who might not even turn up."

"Why don't you leave your key with me when he is due to come?" Mrs. Melville suggested kindly. "I will open your flat for him and make certain that it is locked again."

Mr. and Mrs. Melville had two married sons but they had no daughter. As we grew to know one another better, I think that she tended at times to give me the unfilled place in her heart — she liked me to address her as "Mother Melville". For the time being, however, her act of neighbourly kindness introduced a decade of mutual aid, although this was heavily loaded in my favour. We visited one another on alternate Saturdays, for an hour or so of local "gossip", but we never intruded on one another's privacy. It was a great comfort to both parties to know that only a brick wall divided us in time of need.

When Serge was discharged from hospital and before he came to help us in the department, he spent a lot of time in

my flat. I encouraged him to use it for reading, or study, or just relaxation, rather than sit alone in his room in the St. Kilda boarding house. After he started work, he would come in the weekends.

Competent and thorough in all he did, he was filled with a deep desire to help me. He had the most ingenious ideas and did a great deal to improve on the comforts of my flat. I used to take him with me when I visited next door. He was shy and had little to say for himself but the kindly Melvilles included him in the warmth of their friendship. It was not only because he was my protégé. They liked him for himself.

One day they showed me how they had covered all their shelves with linoleum and suggested that I do the same. "Get Serge to do it for you before he goes back to Hong Kong," she whispered in my ear. "There's an awful lot of work involved."

I told her that Serge had already taken measurements of all my shelves and had brought samples of oilcloth for my selection. He had suggested using this rather than linoleum because it served the same purpose and was much less expensive. "I have already chosen the one I like," I said, "and as soon as he has worked out the total quantity required, I shall get it."

On the Saturday following we bought the oilcloth. The man in the store could not believe that any one flat could use so many rolls but I accepted Serge's figure. It took him a whole week to complete the job but, by the time he had finished every shelf in the flat was covered — the oilcloth had been laid on with special adhesive. There was less than half a yard of material left.

Serge was picking up nicely when he received a severe setback. Gilman's had written suggesting that he should remain in Australia where the climate was more favourable and where he could begin life afresh. Naturally, the letter said, if he wished to return to Hong Kong, they would be glad to have him but, because of the Korean situation, the outlook in business was uncertain and they might have to retrench later on.

No one — least of all Serge — could blame Gilman's for the suggestion. Things were indeed uncertain and Hong Kong's climate was never the best for people with the slightest sus-

picion of tuberculosis. And what would happen if his health again broke down?

Serge felt he had no alternative but to remain in Australia but he was heartbroken. He lost once again the confidence which had returned with winning the struggle against his long illness. He had no desire to fight on. There was nothing that anyone could say or do to comfort him.

Serge immediately set about seeking employment; he could no longer be a responsibility of the Pathology Department. He had received an excellent basic training at Gilman's. As well as being the Hong Kong agents for Lloyd's of London, Gilman & Co. held wide and varied interests. Their Engineering Department, under the management of Paul Reveley, had been set up only after the war. Paul had been our quartermaster in Stanley Camp where, besides being a friend, I had known him to be a strict disciplinarian. He was seldom to be seen without his slide rule, with which he calculated the number of grains of rice or units of electricity each person was allowed. Under the direction of a man of Reveley's calibre, Serge had received a stringent upbringing in all matters related to the installation and service of a wide range of electrical and mechanical equipment from large diesel engines to air-conditioning plants and household sanitary ware. Reveley had taught him to be rigidly upright in his appraisal of a situation, meticulously careful in routine, and highly critical of standards in both his own work and that of his subordinates. With his intelligence and adaptability Serge had, within a few years, become installation engineer and workshop supervisor, in charge of a staff of two Chinese assistant engineers, a foreman and some twenty-six fitters and apprentices. The Directors of Gilman's had supported his application for British naturalization which had been granted in 1952.

When Serge made the decision to stay on in Australia, Professor King immediately invited him to join the department. Serge thought that we would not have sufficient work to justify his appointment and I urged the Professor not to carry his altruism too far. The Accountant flatly said that he failed to see how a medical department could possibly benefit from the services of an engineer on its staff. With our combined resis-

tance it would appear that Professor King would have difficulty in fitting him into our establishment. But he foresaw the future development of the department, especially in the field of mechanical and electronic apparatus. He handled the situation with his customary determination and not a little finesse and he soon persuaded the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria to provide a grant for Serge's salary. Serge joined us as a Senior Technical Officer on 1st November, 1954.

Poor Serge. He tried so hard and worked so diligently but it was not easy for someone with his background of illness to feel at home amongst our specimens and in an atmosphere positively reeking of formalin. Moreover his heart was not really with us. We feared that his health would suffer a relapse.

One night the Associate-Professor, George Christie, and I had been working late and we sat on talking, trying to find some way of helping Serge. If only we could give him something to live for, George had said.

After some thought I ventured: "Do you know, George, for two pins I would marry him?"

"Why don't you, Jean," says George. "That would be his salvation. It would give his life a purpose."

"It wouldn't work, George. I'd be the laughing stock of the department. Think of what their reaction would be if they even heard of my intention to marry someone so much younger than myself," I said.

"Why tell them?" George suggested. "Let them find out. Those who know you will understand. As for those who don't, well, they won't matter anyway."

I promised to think it over. It was as cold blooded as that.

And think it over I did, weighing all the implications of such a step. I sounded out Elizabeth and Stewart. Elizabeth welcomed the idea but, then, she was married, and older than John. She worried unduly over my welfare. Stewart told me later that she had long thought that it would be a good idea but he had reminded her that it was not a matter in which she could make any suggestion. John was at the Forestry School at Creswick. Stewart undertook to tell him. I never knew how John felt. If he had any misgivings he did not show it. My children are like that. All they ever want is my happiness.



They're always ready to let me make the decisions and accept whatever I think best.

I shirked telling the Professor though, mainly because I wanted to spare him the embarrassment of showing his shock and surprise. George was persuaded to do the telling. According to George, Edgar King was truly shocked and was afraid that I would wish to leave the department. When he found that I was anxious to stay, he said, quite typically: "Splendid! Splendid! . . . Now we shall have the two of them." He teased me later, saying that he felt sure my main purpose in marrying Serge was to keep him in the department.

Serge was against the idea on account of his health. But his objection was overruled when Mr. Hayward, the surgeon, gave him a completely satisfactory report at the final examination. We were married on 4th June, 1955. Serge insisted on being host to our close friends at a small gathering at Menzies Hotel but only Mr. and Mrs. Melville, Professor King, George Christie and Stewart were present at our marriage. Elizabeth and John had gone on to receive our guests.

We had a few days at Surfers' Paradise in Queensland and there was little disruption to our work. We kept our separate identities. It is true that I had changed my marital status but that was a mere detail. I remained Mrs. Gittins in the University. In the department I was still "Mrs. G.". My protective instinct was thus fully satisfied and Serge literally worshipped the ground on which I trod.

## SERGE GOES TO ENGLAND AND I TAG ON

No prophet, however strong his imagination or bold his dream, could have forecast the amazing growth of activities in the department during these years. We owed this to the personal efforts of Edgar King. Almost from the day he took over, Professor King had devoted his energy and attention to the promotion of research. Indeed, he appeared to have no interest other than the "Path School". His single-mindedness soon bore fruit. Our growing reputation in Australia and overseas must have given him a good deal of satisfaction, yet he never accepted the credit. Instead he maintained that our achievements were but a natural development of the pattern set by his predecessors, often quoting: "The dwarf sees further than the giant, when he has the giant's shoulders to mount on".\*

By 1956 the staff had more than doubled, and the wide range of investigations included the morphology of emphysema, tumour studies, carcinogenesis, and experimental lathyrism (which led to dissecting aneurysms of the aorta and bone changes). Professor King had for some time nursed an ambition to develop microdissection of kidney tubules, but this was a test of technical skill and infinite patience and he had to await the right type of worker to turn up.

He encouraged research staff to share in teaching duties and teaching members to take part in research projects. Professor King urged a potential investigator to pursue his own interest if he had one, believing that this would provide the strongest incentive to personal collaboration. He denied the

---

\* Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *The Friend*, i, Essay 8.

staff nothing in the way of facility or equipment, sparing no expense that we could afford, and sometimes spending more than we could comfortably afford. However, he made it a rule, and adhered to it, that we should "count our pennies" each October for, much as though he hated withholding assistance from any worker, he had a greater horror of spending in excess of his budget. It was quite an effort to keep abreast of the various funds and to relate the expenses of each worker to the conditions governing his particular project. Fortunately for me a new assistant joined us at this time: Sandra Fehring took a natural interest in people and, more importantly, carried out her instruction with scrupulous care, so that I was saved a great deal of the soul-destroying drudgery of routine.

Having had editorial experience in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Surgery*, Edgar King firmly believed that, all things being equal, a well presented paper reached the printer far sooner than one on which less care had been bestowed. He equipped the office (using the Special Fund — we were not allowed to spend the departmental vote on "luxuries") with electric typewriters when these were still a novelty, giving us one of the first executive models introduced into Australia by International Business Machines. As our papers gained acceptance in the literature, research grants poured in, not only from the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, who was our largest benefactor, but other outside bodies, such as the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Life Insurance Medical Research Fund of Australia and New Zealand, and the National Heart Foundation, were happy to support our projects. Simultaneous with the improvement in our financial situation, our equipment became more complex. In 1955 we received a special donation from the Collier Fund to purchase an electron microscope.

We found plenty of work for Serge. "Prof." gave him an order book, and the green light, and told him to go ahead with building up a decent workshop. This he had to begin from scratch as we did not at that time have more than a minimum of tools. As soon as he had assembled the equipment, he was besieged with requests for technical advice and

assistance. We began to wonder how we could ever have done without him.

His first big assignment was to "think about" the development of an automatic machine for sharpening microtome knives for section cutting. Until recent years the senior technician, Mr. Guthrie, who had been in the department since 1929, had sharpened and stropped his own knives; but with the increase in our activities, the junior staff had been unable to cope. We had imported, and discarded as unsatisfactory, several expensive models from overseas. "Prof." was keen to build a machine to suit our own requirements and had suggested that the design should be based on the principle of a reciprocal movement of the lapping plate, with the knife held steady: "a thing that works like a locomotive" he had told Serge. The "thing" took much thought and several years to construct. For the time being, however, Serge's attention was directed to other and more urgent matters. Edgar King was perfectly right. The appointment of a technical specialist had been long overdue.

Electron microscopes are generally accepted as standard equipment in university and other scientific laboratories at the present time but, ten to fifteen years ago, and especially in Australia, they were still a rare research tool. We had ordered a low-resolution model (EM4), built by Metropolitan-Vickers of England and we awaited its arrival with an eagerness mixed with real concern.

The machine arrived early in 1956. No one, possibly not even the makers, could have foreseen the vagaries of its temperament. It was installed by the local agents but they could provide no regular maintenance or service. Serge had sufficient general knowledge to have an idea of an electron microscope's scope and function but, in spite of his broad training in commercial equipment, he had had no experience in this highly specialized field. No one really expected him to look after our machine but, because he was the only person in the department with mechanical training, it inevitably fell to his lot to find out what was wrong when it failed to function as it should.

The "Prof." realized that, as a long-term proposition, this would never do. He made up his mind to send Serge to England, hoping that several months spent with the makers would give him an insight into the microscope's workings and a greater confidence to deal with the problems as they arose. The Anti-Cancer Council kindly provided the grant for his travel and Metropolitan-Vickers welcomed the proposed visit. I could not let him go to England without seizing the opportunity to go with him and, with Professor King's approval, I applied for leave of absence to enable me to do the trip.

There were no special arrangements to be made for the children on this occasion. Indeed, they were no longer children although I still thought of and often referred to them as such. Elizabeth had her own home and she and Stewart were able to have John to stay whenever he came to Melbourne. They had been doing this ever since Serge and I had been married. I never fail to be thankful for my children's remarkable thoughtfulness and understanding. The years of separation seemed to have united us more closely and the inclusion of Stewart into the family circle had only strengthened these ties.

Exactly a week before we left for England, Elizabeth and Stewart called at *Sheridan Close* with their first child — a little girl named Alison Jean.

"Prof." had been most anxious to spare Serge the rigours of an English winter and had arranged for us to arrive in Manchester in mid-April. I was looking forward keenly to seeing Grace again. Following her husband's death in Hong Kong in 1954, Grace had returned to settle in England, to be with her daughter Shirley, who was training to be a dentist in the University of London. There were others too. Vic's daughter, Vera, and her family were still in London; also Billy's sister, Charlotte. Charlotte's husband, Frank Fisher, had retired and they now lived in Kenton in Middlesex. Frank was a keen amateur rosarian and their house became the headquarters for all the Gittins grandchildren who happened to be studying in England and needed a home for their holidays. Besides members of the family there were

many friends I wished to visit. Three months would be barely sufficient for all I planned to do. My first consideration would have to be for people; sight-seeing would need to take second place. I was still debating whether to call at Hong Kong on our way to England, or to stop by on our return, when Metropolitan-Vickers settled the question with a request for Serge's arrival to be put forward a fortnight. We had no alternative but to leave immediately for London. This turned out to be a most regrettable circumstance for, by so doing I lost an irretrievable opportunity to see my Father. After a brief illness in April, he passed away.

We left Melbourne on the afternoon of 31st March, 1956, to board the Qantas superconstellation *Southern Mist* in Sydney. Travelling all night, we breakfasted at Darwin, touched down at Jakarta, and went on to Singapore where we spent the only overnight stop of the journey. Raffles Hotel was cool and spacious. I felt thoroughly at home in the old colonial style architecture, into which had been blended every modern comfort. We made brief technical stops at Bangkok, Calcutta, Karachi and Cairo. At Rome, we boarded a bus with our lunches and were taken on a superficial tour, lasting under two hours, in which we covered St. Peter's Church and the Vatican city as well as many ruins of the second century preserved in the midst of modern Rome. We flew over the Alps at an altitude of 20,500 ft and, skirting Mont Blanc, we had a magnificent aerial panorama of the Alpine ranges covered in a blanket of thick snow. The next stop was London, at 17.20 hr, on Tuesday, 3rd April. At London airport we were met by all the family. Serge and I spent the night at Grace's house at Ridge Hill, near Golders Green and, as Serge was anxious to push on to Manchester, we left by train the next morning with a promise that I should return to London as soon as Serge had settled.

We had reservations at Arcot Hotel in Altringham, a town in Cheshire, about eight miles from Metropolitan-Vickers's extensive works on the outskirts of Manchester, and not far from the famous Old Trafford Cricket Ground. London had been dull but fine. Manchester gave us a cold reception. On

leaving the railway station, cold winds and driving rain greeted us. It began to snow. We learnt to expect this. We found Arcot Hotel to be a stately old mansion with large rooms, lofty ceilings and thickly carpeted floors. We had a comfortable bedroom overlooking the front garden which appeared poised to burst into spring.

Serge made arrangements to attend Metropolitan-Vickers on Monday, 9th April. He was to be an observer in the laboratories of the Scientific Apparatus Department. Here security regulations were very strict—because of his name, they had already asked for a dossier of his antecedents, which had apparently been to their satisfaction. They sent a car for him—a Daimler that quite took our breath away. This is apparently a courtesy they extend to all overseas visitors. Their fleet of cars consisted mainly of Humber Super Snipes and Daimlers, and included several Rolls Royces. In Serge's case the service continued until we took delivery of our own Ford *Popular* later in the week.

Ten days in Manchester and I returned to London for a week's visit. From Euston Station, where Grace met me, we went to Kew Gardens. Grace wanted me to see the prunus trees in blossom. Pruned to similar shapes and kept to the same size, the trees set a colourful background to the beds of spring flowers which had been stirred into activity by the mild April sunshine.

It matters not how long Grace and I are separated, we can always pick up the threads from where we had left them. It is the same with Vera. I had two nights with her during my week's visit. Young Geoffrey gave us no trouble and, with her husband managing the cooking, Vera and I were left to gossip to our hearts' content. I need hardly add that the small hours of the morning would find us with no thought of sleep.

On Saturday, 21st April, I joined other tourists on a sight-seeing mission to the West End. It was the Queen's birthday and the guardsmen at Buckingham Palace were in full dress uniform. The tour of the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey fulfilled a desire I had harboured since I was sixteen.

Grace had arranged for Miss Sawyer, our former Headmistress in the Diocesan Girls' School in Hong Kong, and another mistress, Miss Allen, to meet me. We dined at a Chinese restaurant in Oxford Street. The dinner, made more pleasing by shared memories, was followed by an evening at the Saville Theatre, to see Sheridan's play *The Rivals*.

Sunday was spent with the Fishers where I met Billy's niece Vivienne and her husband, a Welsh economist Gethyn Davies, who was to join the University of Hong Kong. With Monday came the keenly awaited visit to Oxford where Vic's son, Tak Shing, was reading law. Now a youth of twenty years, Tak Shing had developed a great charm of manner. He devoted his whole day to showing me the many places of interest. I was first introduced to Wadham College and shown their magnificent dining hall with its rafted ceilings and long oak tables and their library of books. Tak Shing was obviously happy and proud of his College. We strolled along the shaded cloisters and sunlit courts of Trinity and Worcester, had a lunch of curried prawns at the Taj Mahal, an Indian restaurant and, in the afternoon, we visited Christ Church College and Lady Margaret Hall. Everywhere the gardens were beautiful, the lawns a deep emerald green seldom encountered in Australia. We rested a few moments in the peaceful enchantment of Christ Church Meadow and idly watched the punting from the Thames bank. The day ended with afternoon tea with Dr. Sloss, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, followed by dinner at a favourite rendezvous.

I was to return to Manchester the next morning and was at breakfast at Vera's when Grace telephoned the sobering news from Hong Kong. Father was ill with bronchopneumonia. We held a family council. We knew that the end was near.

Two days later, on 26th April, a cable to Altringham announced his death. His seemingly unconquerable spirit which had struggled against youthful adversity and won through half a century of indifferent health had finally succumbed to a fatal illness of the aged. Fate had denied his ambition to be a centenarian but he had reached his ninety-fourth year, retaining a determined vitality and a remarkable clarity of mind. This was an achievement not to be decried. Less than a year before



this, he had travelled to London, to receive a new accolade at the hands of the Queen.

I received many telephoned messages of condolence, letters and cables from friends all over Britain and from Australia. Serge nobly suggested that I should leave immediately for Hong Kong. Had Father been alive and waiting to see me, I would not have hesitated but, as things were, I thought it better to let the Hong Kong visit take place on our way home.

A large mail had arrived from Melbourne.

"The 'Prof.' wants you to take home some rabbits," Serge said, "and what is more, they must have ears 12-14 inches long."

"Rabbits to Australia?" I asked. "You must be joking?"

"See for yourself," Serge replied and passed the letter to me.

I read the letter through. Sure enough, "Prof." wanted six rabbits: two bucks and four does. "This must be a long-term project," I remarked. "He wants them for breeding." The rabbits were to be of a special variety; their outsized ears were needed for a special investigation, using the ear-chamber technique. If I could get the animals, he said, he would arrange for permission for their import.

"Oh well," I sighed resignedly, "if he wants them I shall have to try to get them for him. I wonder if Qantas would be willing to transport them by air?"

A letter from Stewart gave the news that Elizabeth had had her hands full with the baby but things were now under control. John had been home and was looking well. He had taken a laudable interest in his niece and had told them he was training to run the mile in six minutes. It appeared that he stood a chance for selection to represent the School of Forestry in the long relay to carry the Olympic Torch from Olympia in Greece to Melbourne. The XVI Olympiad, the first Olympic Games in the southern hemisphere, was to be held in Melbourne later in the year. I felt very proud.

Meanwhile sporting interests in England had centred on the closing stages of the football season. We had hired a television set — television being still in its experimental stages in Australia, we were anxious to see what it was like. One of the first programmes we watched was a direct telecast of the Foot-

ball Association's Cup Final at Wembley on Saturday, 5th May, in which the ill-fated Manchester United team (more than a half of its members were later killed in an air crash over Germany) defeated Birmingham City in a most exciting match. I now looked forward to viewing the Test cricket — the Australians had arrived in England for the current series. I was, however, still hoping to spend a day at Lord's during the second Test in June. Australia House had been unable to assist me with a ticket but I had written to the Secretary of the Marylebone Cricket Club. It was just conceivable that they might yet hold a vacancy on one of the days — in fact any day — of their most sought-after match of the series.

Early in May there were intimate reunions with the closest of my friends from Stanley Camp. Ethel Byrne, who lived in Lytham, near the Lancashire resort of Blackpool, came to see us at Altringham and stayed the night. Soon after this I journeyed south, driving through Staffordshire and Warwickshire, past the Castle and ruins of Kenilworth, towards Stratford-on-Avon where I was to meet Jeanne Faid. On the spur of the moment I joined a guided tour of the massive Warwick Castle which stands on a rock rising sheer out of the River Avon. Its battlemented walls are in places ten feet thick. We were told that its history may be traced to the time of Edward the Confessor (1013-1066).

At Stratford-on-Avon Jeanne and I attended a performance of *Hamlet* in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Early the following morning we left for Hampshire. There was a great deal of chatter on the way but this did not dull my appreciation of the countryside as we climbed the hilly country of the Cotswolds. There is a peculiar charm in the colourful limestone rocks which form the steeper slopes of these ranges.

We headed south through the Salisbury plains to Stonehenge with its stately monumental relics. We passed Salisbury Cathedral in the early evening. It was still light enough for photography. Darkness had not fallen at nine o'clock when we reached Highcliffe-on-Sea, in Hampshire, where Jeanne lived.

Who can do justice to the fresh beauty of the New Forest in spring or capture the charm of the wild ponies, each mare with her foal, venturing to the forest's edge apparently com-

pletely unafraid of the passing traffic. We drove to Dorsetshire for luncheon with the Hugheses. Gwilym Hughes had been Billy's friend and my teacher and, at our wedding in 1929, he had been the principal speaker. He was now senior master at Canford School in Wimbourne which occupies the former home of the Duke of Dorset from whom the grounds had been acquired in 1923. Canford School has fine buildings set in natural surroundings, spacious playing fields, a river for salmon fishing and a Norman chapel of which they are very proud. Gwilym and I had not met since 1930 but the years between seemed only to have sharpened the keenness of our friendship. It was long past midnight before Jeanne and I were allowed to drive away and then only on my solemn promise to return before the end of my visit.

I said "Goodbye" to Jeanne at 8.30 in the morning and, driving through Marlborough to Oxford, I stopped for lunch with Dr. and Mrs. Sloss. I was still a good way from Altringham but the peace of the countryside in the long twilight hours made this part of the journey particularly pleasant, even though it had been a full twelve hours since I had left Highcliffe-on-Sea.

I returned to London at the end of May and made flying visits to see the widows of the Jack brothers. Grace drove me through the lovely Epping Forest to Ipswich in Suffolk. We lunched with Daisy Jack, whose husband had been the first of the three members of William C. Jack & Co. to have died in internment. Daisy herself had been with us in Stanley Camp.

On Whitmonday Grace drove me to Naphill near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. Our journey led us through beautiful forest country marred only by the heavy holiday traffic. Grace left me to stay the night with Sybil Jack. From Naphill I returned by train to London and boarded a bus from Baker Street to Dorking in Surrey. I was visiting Jane Buckwell. Jane knew Elizabeth and John well. She took me through forests of beech and silver birch trees, relieved by clumps of brilliantly coloured rhododendron, to Leith Hill. The woods were moist and often carpeted with bluebells laden with heavy dew, lending a fairyland appearance to the sunlit trees. The tower at the top of Leith Hill, with its view of the surrounding

country, and approached by a circular stairway of seventy-four steps, was a worthwhile Mecca for the pilgrimage.

I visited the Chelsea Flower Show. This event marks, annually, the unofficial start of the "London Season"; the brilliant array of massed colour was in itself worth seeing; I can still recall the beautiful exhibitions arranged by Suttons and Carters, the seed people, and the splendour of the azalea and rhododendron display from Windsor Great Park.

Most weekends I would spend with Serge in Altrincham and on a Sunday we might have Mabel's youngsters, Peter and Sheila Hall, to lunch. Peter, who had been educated at Sydney Grammar School was at that time studying accountancy; Sheila was an architecture student at the University of Liverpool, following in her father's footsteps.

After lunch we would explore the nearby country, perhaps driving to Lynn and Frodsham and through the Delamere Forest. We "discovered" the little church in the village of Daresbury in Cheshire, with the memorial chapel to C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), in which a stained glass window depicts characters of *Wonderland* fame. Or we might drive to the Derwent Reservoir to see the practice area in which Guy Gibson and his 617 Squadron perfected their devastating attack on the Möhne and Eder Dams. Nearby was the memorial to the dog "Tip", who had remained with her dead master for fifteen weeks during the winter of 1954.

We drove east to the wild moors of Yorkshire, or over the Pennines to the rolling Derbyshire plains, or around to Chester, the only city in England that still possesses its Roman walls perfect in their entire circuit of two miles.

Serge and I spent the long Queen's Birthday weekend in early June at Grassmere in Westmoreland where we found rest and quiet pleasure in the exquisite beauty of the Lake District.

Monday, 11th June saw me crossing the border at Carlisle and over the Cheviot Hills into Scotland. After the heavy industrial traffic of Lancashire and Cumberland, it was a delight to drive along the peaceful country lanes of Dumfriesshire, beside which trees grew in abundance and wild flowers lined their edges. An occasional sheep would wander across the road from unfenced fields.

I crossed the River Tweed and climbed hilly country to Edinburgh where I was to stay with Kitty Gordon. I had known Kitty, during hostilities in Hong Kong, as Matron of the University Relief Hospital, and as Sister Gordon in Stanley Camp. In advising her of my proposed visit to Scotland, I had mentioned the beauty of the English Lakes. Kitty, who knew her country well, was eager to show me the Scottish version: they were, she said, grander and on a more lavish scale. She planned an extensive tour of Scotland, in which she would be my guide.

Kitty and I left Edinburgh early the next morning in the pouring rain. We were headed for Aberfeldy; our destination, *Hight West*, a white house in the heart of the Grampian Mountains where our mutual friends, the Simpsons, were expecting us for lunch. Emeritus Professor Simpson, of the University of Hong Kong, had been a prisoner-of-war in an officers' camp in Kowloon; his family had been with us in Stanley.

"Come along, Jean," he said when lunch was over and the happy chatter paused awhile. "The rain has stopped. You must see something of the country."

He drove us along the side of the River Tay, through the grounds of Taymouth Castle, to Loch Tay and up Glen Lyon, past Fortingall Village. "Here" he said, "is the oldest piece of vegetation in Europe."

We entered a small churchyard. In a quiet corner, well protected by wrought iron railing, stood an old yew tree.

"Now," he went on to say, "we'll visit the birthplace of Pontius Pilate."

"Pontius Pilate?" I murmured doubtfully. "Wasn't it he who tried Christ?"

"Of course he did." The reply came promptly. "Didn't you know that his father was a Roman centurion stationed in Britain?"

Not being very sure of my facts I refrained from further comment. On reflection later, I concluded that I must have had my leg pulled. At the same time, there was the evidence of a stone tablet by the roadside. But heavy mist had come up again and I couldn't be certain that the inscription had actually supported the Professor's claim.

Kitty and I moved on. We drove up "Royal" Deeside, so-called because of its proximity to Balmoral Castle. We passed Braemar and Ballater and went over the Grampians to Nairn, a lovely sheltered spot nestled against the foot of the mountains, and set like a jewel on the North Sea coast. It was fine and mild. Delphiniums and lupins were in full bloom and rambler roses, trained over the cottages, gave us a colourful welcome. At 10 p.m. the sun still shone.

It was only a short distance from Nairn to Inverness and, for once, a straight road. Crossing the neck of Scotland along the bank of Loch Ness, we went westwards towards the Kyle of Lochalsh until the blue Cullin Hills of the Isle of Skye were sighted. Then turning south from Glen Garry we spent the night at Fort William, at the foot of Ben Nevis where sheltered valleys still lay covered in snow. On the following day the weather was perfect as we travelled down the west coast of Scotland. We were greeted at every turn by the most enchanting views of mountain, loch and stream — the Lake District again and, as Kitty had claimed, on a grander scale.

Continuing south we went as far as Oban and Inverary in Argyleshire before turning east by the lovely Loch Lomond. Spending the last night of the tour in the Trossachs, we made a leisurely return to Edinburgh. The tour had lasted five days and covered a distance of almost one thousand miles.

I could not leave Edinburgh without seeing something of the city. Kitty took pride in showing me the ancient fortress of Edinburgh Castle, and St. Margaret's Church, with its Norman features, said to be the smallest church in the world. We visited the Palace of Holyrood House and saw the many relics of Mary, Queen of Scots.

My return trip to Altringham was spoilt by heavy rain.

But the skies cleared at Penrith in Cumberland and the sun shone over English Lakes. I considered driving across to Ulswater and over the Kirkstone Pass, where the views were reputed to be magnificent, but a swift and dense fog suddenly blew up. It became so thick that the Automobile Association patrols were called out for special duty and heavy lorries were forced to pull to the kerb side.

Another spell in London and I spent the 25th of June at Lord's. The M.C.C. had given me a seat on the Balcony, reserved for overseas visitors, in the Grand Stand. In glorious sunshine, in the company of other "colonials" I watched with consternation Miller and Archer wreck the England batting; I saw the Queen arrive and the cricketers presented. Amongst the England team was young Colin Cowdrey, who was playing in his first series of Tests against Australia in England. Although he disappointed in this match, the great batsman was one day to become England's Captain. Twelve years later (in 1968), he had earned the unique distinction of representing England in one hundred Test matches. How fitting that he should celebrate the occasion by scoring a century.

Two nights with Vera, during which we had a lovely drive through Surrey and Sussex for an afternoon at Brighton. The fiery sunset on our return journey seemed incongruous with the simple charm of the English landscape. Arriving in London, we made a slight detour to Westminster where the faint glow of twilight on the Thames contrasted strangely with the brilliant neon signs of Piccadilly and Oxford Street.

I went up to Cambridge to meet Chris Wanklyn, who had visited Hong Kong thirty years before as a girl guide commissioner, and her friend, who was to act as our guide. We had morning coffee at the Combination Room at Clare College, which boasts of some of the loveliest gardens. I drank in the historic traditions associated with Christ's, and St. John's, and Trinity. After lunch we visited King's College, noted for its high-roofed and ornate chapel with the beautiful stained glass windows, which were removed for safety during the "blitz". We were shown the "Mathematical" Bridge at Queen's College, built over a moat to test, it is said, the theory of stresses.

I had promised to visit the Matthew Stewarts at Stoke Poges near Slough in Buckinghamshire. He was Emeritus Professor of Pathology at the University of Leeds and had spent some time in Melbourne some years before. They took me out for a picnic lunch in the woods and later we explored the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, where rhododendron and rock garden, and heath and heather, vied with herbaceous borders in colour to give me some of my loveliest slides. In

the quiet of the evening we visited the churchyard which had inspired Gray's elegy. In the two hundred years since this was written, the hum of traffic had replaced the solemn stillness of Gray's parting day. Nor was there evidence of plodding plowman nor lowing herd.

I returned to Manchester to prepare for the end of our visit. Having experienced Hong Kong's cross-harbour traffic problems, Serge had a special interest in the Mersey Tunnel. On our last Sunday in Cheshire we went over to Liverpool and drove through the four-lane motorway which runs under the River Mersey for two miles. The greenish lighting of this subterranean channel, lined with a glass dado, seemed almost eerie in the quiet of a Sabbath day but it needed no stretch of imagination to visualize how, during the week, the tunnel could turn into a roaring, even frightening, thoroughfare.

Time was running out. We spent our last week with Grace. Grace and I took the young people to the Royal Festival Hall to the ballet *Les Sylphides*, and to Covent Garden to see *The Bartered Bride*.

Serge and I were booked on a continental coach tour. We left London at 6.30 in the morning on 21st July. It was a wrench to part with Grace, and yet I came away strangely happy with having achieved so much in a relatively short time. Not only had I met up with all my friends but, because of their hospitality and the spread of their geographical location, I had seen a lot of the country besides. Yes, I was more than content.

We were headed for Switzerland. The route lay through Dover, Ostend and Brussels, where we stayed the first night. We joined the River Meuse at Namur on the French border and, travelling through the Forest of Ardennes, we had glimpses of the River Moselle before arriving at Metz. It was interesting country and Metz is a lovely town with bridges and a cathedral and public gardens.

We followed the Moselle right to its source in the heart of the Vosges Mountains, crossing the border into Switzerland at Basle. Here the scenery changed abruptly from the somewhat careless prettiness of France to the trim, Christmas-card setting of Switzerland. It was like turning over a page in a book.





*The Temple-School Complex*

*Photograph by Yat Sun Printing Co., Hong Kong*



*Mr. and Mrs. Gittins  
celebrate their Diamond Wedding  
December, 1953*

We arrived at Montreux late at night and awoke to the breath-taking beauty of Lac Léman (Lake of Geneva) on a calm and cloudless morning. The snow-capped peak of the Dent du Midi glistened in the early sunshine and the reflections on the lake were as yet undisturbed. Serge was content to relax on the balcony just to enjoy the peace of his surroundings. The three-day bus journey had exhausted him. I took the opportunity to join an all-day tour to Chamonix where, swinging up the precipitous side of the mountain in a heavily laden *teleferique* to Le Brévent, we could have a closer view of the magnificent glaciers and peaks of the Mont Blanc chain.

Another outing took us over the scenic "William Tell" country of the Bernese Oberland. As we twisted and turned on the route through thick forests, we caught many a glimpse of snow-clad peaks in the distance. The view of the Jungfrau range from Interlaken was more beautiful than I could have imagined. We visited the nearby Trummelbach Falls where, armed with mackintoshes, we went up a lift built inside a huge rock, to walk through dark tunnels to see the mighty drop from the other side.

English papers were available. On 27th July we were shocked to read of the sinking of the 29,000 ton Italian liner *Andrea Doria*, following a collision in dense fog with the Swedish ship *Stockholm*, 190 miles east of New York. Sporting news reported the rout of the Australian team in the fourth Test at Old Trafford, with England retaining the "Ashes". Laker had made cricket history by taking a total of nineteen wickets in this match, having captured all ten Australian wickets in the second innings — an all-time record.

The evening papers of the same day brought word of the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Nasser of Egypt. Serge feared the implications of this flagrant act of international piracy and was deeply depressed. Unable to put aside memories of his early background, the proximity of communist inspired activities worried him far more than it did me. However, because of the tenseness of the world situation, an organized trip to Zermatt, to see the Matterhorn, was cancelled.

We joined the Qantas airliner at Frankfurt in Germany on 4th August. At Singapore Serge and I parted company —

he to continue direct to Melbourne; I turned north to Hong Kong.

It was a sad home coming. Before crossing the harbour I called to see Billy's mother. Mr. Gittins had died shortly after they had celebrated their Diamond Wedding in December, 1953. In spite of my remarriage the closeness of my relationship with Mrs. Gittins had not altered. In fact, she had confided to Mabel that, since her own bereavement, she had appreciated more fully my difficulties during the first years following the war. She was glad that I had remarried.

As this was to be a short visit I kept my time entirely for the family, sharing it between my people and the Gittinses. The days slipped by all too quickly.

I left for Melbourne on 17th August to resume my obligations and responsibilities. There was much to tell the children but, in the rush of modern day living, one tends to look forward, rather than back at what has gone before. Moreover, Melbourne was in the grip of Olympic Fever — the Games were only three short months away.

I arrived home too late to gain admission to see the pageantry that goes with the Opening Ceremony, and Serge did not approve of my getting a ticket on the "black market". Stewart, who saw my disappointment, took me on the fifth day when, amongst other events, we saw Chris Brasher of Great Britain win the 3000 metre Steeplechase. The Melbourne Games will always live in my memory, not only because I had seen something of them, but because John had gained selection to represent the School of Forestry in the Torch Relay. At four o'clock in the morning, on 22nd November, 1956, the day on which the Games began in Melbourne, John carried the Torch for a mile on the route to Creswick. If I might borrow the words of the Baron de Coubertin: "The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part . . . . . ." John's part had been infinitesimal, yet it was a part. His Father would have been pleased. John himself is the proud owner of a large bronze medallion to commemorate the event.

## AND THE TREE FLOURISHED

After the excitement of my overseas trip it would not have been surprising had I felt disinclined to fall back into dull routine. But routine in the "Path School" in the late 1950s was never dull. Far from it. In spite of my absence, I had not been out of touch. Four months was not, after all, a long time to be away, and the "Prof." had kept me informed of all that was going on. To fit again into the picture, and to cope once more with administrative problems, was a challenge rather than a chore. I thrived on it. By this time, not only had my roots taken and gained strength, but the tree which had been so rudely transplanted only ten years before, had grown and flourished. Never in my life before had I felt so well.

The little EM4 gave Serge no end of trouble. Now that he had been to England, he had become very conscious of his responsibility for the smooth working of this machine. He could not understand why no one held him to blame for its inadequacies. He worried so much it was said that he would turn pale at the very sight of the microscopists!

Professor King must have been a perfectionist and a realist at the same time. Perhaps he was just intolerant of anything that did not perform well. He determined that we would have to start saving immediately for a better microscope, leaving the EM4 to provide training facilities for beginners.

At this time several other laboratories had placed orders for a Siemens *Elmiskop I*, a machine of proven efficiency. The makers were willing, if a sufficient number were sold, to provide expert maintenance service. The cost of this machine was A£15,000.

Fifteen thousand pounds is a lot of money but the department was now reasonably well equipped in other directions,

and our earnings had greatly increased in recent years. Specimens sent to us for biopsy had doubled the number reached in 1950. We had also acquired a new source of income from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories who had recently introduced into Australia the Salk vaccine against poliomyelitis. The prepared vaccine was injected into rhesus monkeys specially imported from the Philippines. Our part was to examine the monkey tissue for signs of viral infection. Twelve monkeys were used in each test, and the twelve serial sections from each of seven pieces of tissue from every monkey made a total of one thousand and eight sections to be processed and examined for every test. Repeated tests were necessary. This posed a heavy burden on the department but, with ingenuity and practice, the technical procedure became streamlined. Because of the vital importance of the vaccine to the community, our contribution to the programme was a responsibility which Edgar King, as the Professor of Pathology, could not have refused. We opened immediately a "Microscope Fund", and into this fund was placed every penny we earned.

By the middle of 1959 we had seen our way towards financing the cost of a new microscope, and our laboratory was added to the list of potential customers for the German machine. Since its acquisition in 1960, this microscope has seen good and trouble free service. It is maintained by the makers who now have representatives in Melbourne. At that time, however, Serge was fortunately able to cope with the installation. This saved us the cost of flying an engineer from Germany.

Meanwhile Serge had become a real asset to the department. He made himself thoroughly *au fait* with the research equipment and was soon able to adjust and improve to suit our special needs. In between times he designed, experimented with and finally produced in 1957 an automatic machine for sharpening microtome knives, on the principle suggested by Professor King. This was subjected to intensive testing in the laboratory. An improved version was demonstrated, two years later, at a Convention of the Australasian Institute of Medical Technology, and again at the Victorian Cancer Congress at which pathologists from interstate and overseas showed con-



*The "Prof."*



*Serge*

siderable interest. After being in constant use for nearly ten years, the improved model is still in good condition. In fact, because of its "tailor-made" qualities, it is often preferred to the commercial machine built by a local manufacturer from Serge's prototype.

"How on earth do you remember these things?" the "Prof." asked me one day. We had been reminiscing over the various alterations and improvements made in the department over the years. I could almost pinpoint the time of each change.

"This is quite easy for me," I replied. "Everything revolves around my visits to Hong Kong. Whenever you ask me anything, all I have to do is try to recall if it happened before or after one or other of my trips."

"Do you realize," he remarked, "that all this information would be very difficult to gather should anything happen to you? We really must do a history of the department."

He had talked about a history before; but this time it really happened. That same afternoon we sat down and worked out a plan. Professor King pointed out that the Medical School Centenary was to be celebrated in 1962. "We'll have plenty of time to have it ready for the occasion," he said. "We will invite contributions from former members of the Staff." Edgar King was a great believer in co-operative effort. And so "The Melbourne School of Pathology" was born.

The book took three years to produce. During this time Professor King was confined to bed for several months. He spent the hours of his enforced rest studying old records of the building, alternating these with Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". I was allowed to visit him each Wednesday afternoon, to keep him abreast of what was going on in the department.

"Would you like us to compile a catalogue of the specimens in the museum?" I asked him one day. "We could work on it now. We might be able to fit it into the history."

"I hope you know what you are letting yourself in for," he warned, "there are over ten thousand specimens in our museum."



"There are twelve thousand specimens in the museum, not one of which shows a normal condition'," I quoted. My predecessor had boasted of this when I joined the department in 1946. "Yes," I added, "I know what I am doing. You see, we have some free time these days, and I do like to see the girls fully extended. I propose to set Miss van Baer up in the museum whilst we cope with the other work. I have talked it over with the girls. They would be happy to do it."

I could see that he was pleased. "Well," he said, "if publishing costs are not too high, we could include it in the book. Otherwise we could publish it as a supplement. Yes, especially since we have added all the new specimens I have often felt that it would be nice to have a catalogue compiled but it is so enormous a task that I would not have asked it of you. I realize that a catalogue is only a list but, to some future historian, a list of what we had in 1960 could prove to be quite a valuable record."

When Professor King returned to the department we commissioned William Dargie to paint his portrait. Past and present staff members responded readily and generously. The brilliant scarlet and green of his robes contrasted strongly with the more sober crimson and blue of our first Professor, Sir Harry Allen's, and the crimson and red of Sir Peter MacCallum's portraits. Dargie's painting, to mark the tenth anniversary of Edgar King's term as Professor of Pathology, was presented to the Vice-Chancellor, who accepted it on behalf of the University.

Gathering material for the book was time-consuming and frustrating, but it had its entertaining moments. Professor King wrote most of the background history. Special articles were contributed by Sir Peter MacCallum, Sir Roy Cameron, Dr. Leonard B. Cox and many others. George Christie (Associate-Professor) traced the history of teaching and I was permitted to present a layman's account of our research work. Elsdon Storey, a Senior Research Fellow, soon to become Professor of Conservative Dentistry, contributed vignettes which added touches of humour through its pages. We

launched the history\* at a formal dinner attended by a large gathering of past and present staff members on 13th July, 1962.

Towards the end of 1957 I had been reclassified as "Grade A" secretary. Two months later, in recognition, it was said, of my "valuable services to the University" I was advanced to "Special A". This rapid progress was probably to make good a previous oversight: promotion can so easily slip by when one is unwilling to seek it. In 1960, however, I was appointed to the newly established category of "Administrative Assistant" and, only two years later, I went on to its senior grade. I now earned the princely sum of £1180 per annum! I hasten to add that these rather glamorous titles made not the slightest difference to my work, although the increase in salary was, of course, welcome and the status symbol possibly gave me a higher standing in extra-departmental relations. Within the department, I was still the Secretary, and continued to hold the same unique position bequeathed to me by Miss Davies. No other department in the University is quite like ours. Professor MacCallum had been the instigator of secretarial positions outside the main administration, and Miss Davies was the first secretary in the University of Melbourne to be appointed to a departmental post. Succeeding Frieda Davies as I had done, I enjoyed the same privileges. Frieda and I were proud of being Professor MacCallum's secretary; Edgar King had adopted a different viewpoint. As Secretary of the department, I was his colleague and executive officer. We worked together as a team.

All was running smoothly at home too. Alison had been a huge success. She was blond and fair skinned and grew to resemble Stewart in appearance. She fitted well into their lives and had given them a great interest. They had moved into a larger house on The Boulevard in North Balwyn — a lovely white house with plenty of windows in the right places. The wide front garden was filled with a variety of English trees, to which they added Australian gums and wattles and heaths and even a Chinese ginkgo. Margaret Elizabeth joined this happy household in January, 1958. She was as dark

---

\* *"The Melbourne School of Pathology — Phases and Contrasts"*, Department of Pathology, University of Melbourne (1962).

as Ailson was fair, her large black eyes shone handsomely in a little round face. The girls made a charming picture but Elizabeth and Stewart still longed for a son. In November, 1961, Andrew James arrived. Chubby and fair complexioned, he was a placid baby. By this time Elizabeth was more able to cope with young children, which was just as well for, as soon as he became mobile, Andrew grew to be a real menace to peaceful living. He could not be left alone for a single moment. He was a very likeable child none the less and, since going to the local State School, which he loves, he has become a most helpful person. He uses his energy, imagination and ingenuity to make models of simple household equipment. Serge was always partial to him — Andrew has the physique of the Slavonic race which doubtless contributed to the appeal. I often feel it a great pity that Serge is no longer here to guide him in his hobby.

Stewart's parents had handed over their property to their younger son, Derek, and now lived in Ararat, a country town. They had also bought a flat in *Sheridan Close*. Possibly because of their widely differing background and interests, Frank Doery found in Serge an unusual companion. Muriel and I naturally had a common bond in the young people. We met often when they came to Melbourne.

John had passed out of the School of Forestry at the end of 1956. Being young and unmarried he was posted to the Assessment Branch of the Forest Commission. He worked mainly from field camps in the alpine forests of north-eastern Victoria. It was healthy and pleasant living. Not until after he had obtained his degree, and had married, was he attached to a district.

"Do you know that John is going out with a Catholic girl?" Elizabeth asked me one day. "I think he is afraid to tell you about her."

"No, I didn't know," I replied. "But I fail to see why he should be afraid to confide in me. He has only to say that he is certain about her and I am sure that I would accept his judgment and not stand in his way."

Elizabeth was at once up in arms on behalf of her brother. "Mother," she explained, "you may not be aware of this but

in this country, "mixed" marriages are not encouraged. It is generally thought that they cause a lot of unhappiness. John is naturally afraid that you would not countenance such a marriage on his part."

"But I am not prepared to accept generalizations. And I don't care who makes them," I replied. "I think it depends on the people concerned. If the couple is sensible, as I know John to be, and their relatives refrain from interfering, I see no reason why a "mixed" marriage, as you call it, should not be a success. Naturally I would prefer him to marry a Protestant but there are other things to be considered. It is for John to decide. In any case, thank you for letting me know. I shall explain it all to him when he speaks to me. It may not come to anything after all."

The Forest Commission was short of officers and it was not until 1960 that John was allowed to enrol, as a part-time student, to complete his degree course in Forestry. Even then he did not mention the subject. Naturally I was interested in his welfare, and concerned too but, mindful of my own past experience, I realized that this was a delicate matter. I would have to exercise the utmost discretion and care.

One day I decided it was time I spoke. When asked, John told me it was true he was going out with a Catholic girl but that was as far as it went. I went on to explain that if it ever came to a question of marriage, because the Gittins family were such staunch Anglicans, I would prefer him to select someone of the same faith but, if he were certain in his own mind that a particular girl was the right partner for him, it didn't matter who she was, I would not oppose his choice.

"But who is this girl you are taking out, John? Why don't you bring her home one day? I would like to meet her. Tell me something about her."

John told me her name was Barbara Gibson. She was a Government trained, secondary school teacher of domestic art, and taught in a school in Melbourne. He had met her at the home of the District Forester in Mansfield (in north-eastern Victoria). She was his daughter, and her brother, Brian, had trained with John at Creswick.

He brought her home to dinner soon after. I saw that she

was young and good looking — I wouldn't have expected her to have been otherwise. She had an air of quiet efficiency. I felt that, coming as she did from a forestry family, she would understand what it meant to be a forester's wife. This was of prime importance. If anything were to come of this friendship, I felt certain she would make John a good wife.

"How would you like a trip to Hong Kong" Serge asked me early in 1962.

"You wouldn't be joking?" I asked in reply. "Where would I find the money and, more important still, what would you do without me? Unless you would come too?"

"Whilst you have been busy with your book," Serge explained, "I've been saving to send you to Hong Kong. You've always said that December, 1962, will see the one hundredth anniversary of your Father's birth, and how you wished you could be there. By Christmas the book will have been published and the Medical School Centenary celebrations will be over. As for me, I can look after myself for a couple of months."

It was certainly a tempting offer. Six years had passed since I had had my last visit. I looked at him. Yes, I suppose it would not hurt him to be on his own for a while now. His health was so much improved. But how typical it was for Serge to be so thoughtful of me. If I did go I would only take the three weeks of my annual leave. Aloud I said:

"Thank you, Serge. This is most thoughtful of you and whether or not I accept your offer, I will always appreciate it. Naturally I would love to go, but let us not make a decision just yet. I'll see what the family has to say."

The family was delighted, especially Vic. But friends warned me that I was going to find things very changed and I should be prepared for disappointment. We had had a number of bereavements: Eddie had suffered a coronary in 1957 and had died only a year after Father's passing. I had noticed the news item in Melbourne's "Herald", even before the cable from Hong Kong had reached me. Vic herself had been widowed. "M.K." had gone, as suddenly as Eddie had done, in 1959. It happened just as he was about to leave his home for an official function at Government House in honour of

Prince Philip. It had been a great shock to the whole community. I mourned his passing particularly. He had been a wonderful friend. Eva had left Hong Kong for New York and, after K. C. Yeo's retirement, he and Florence had gone to live in England. In Kowloon, Billy's mother had passed away, as had Mabel's husband, George Hall. It was inevitable that I would miss them all.

But Vic was there, as she always is, in time of need. And Robbie had returned from Washington. He had been appointed Military Adviser to President Chiang Kai Shek at Taiwan, but he and Hesta lived mainly at *The Falls*. Hearing of my proposed visit, they asked me to spend some time with them in the old home which had, some years before, been converted into six flats. There were also Mabel, and Victor Gittins, and all the young people of both families. Certainly there would be compensations. I looked forward to seeing them all.

John and Barbara were engaged during Easter of 1962. Barbara had announced her engagement at Orbost in Gippsland, where Mr. Gibson was now Assistant Divisional Forester. I gave a small party at home to enable the children and Mrs. Melville from next door to meet her.

I loved my flat but, for some time now, we had known that it was too small for the growing family. My "small" party turned out to be a crowd in the little flat. Serge and I were exhausted when it was over.

"It is obvious that we can't go on living here," I remarked when we were alone. "The family has grown too large. We'll go flat-hunting tomorrow."

"You won't have far to go," Serge replied. "Come and take a look out of this window." Across the park, in the direction of the City, I saw two square towers above the tree tops. "Do you see those towers?" he added. "There's a new block of flats going up over there."

The next day we walked over. We inspected every external aspect of the partially completed framework. *Domain Park* was situated immediately opposite the Royal Botanic Gardens. There was a huge display board on the northwest corner featuring the different types of flats and their principal points

of appeal. The more I thought of living there, the better I liked the prospect.

"These flats will be far too expensive for us," Serge said. "I was only joking when I pointed them out to you last night."

But, having seen *Domain Park*, I refused to look at anything else. We studied the plans at the agent's, and took stock of our assets. We would, of course, have to sell *Sheridan Close*. There was also our lovely building site by the River Kerang at Surfer's Paradise, where we had spent our honeymoon in Queensland. We had bought it some years before with the intention of retiring there some day. Furthermore the children were both established and had no need of any inheritance from me. As long as we had enough for the future—Serge would be earning for a long time yet—there was no reason why we should not take one of the flats at *Domain Park*. We selected one with two bedrooms on the 17th floor, immediately beneath the west penthouse.

Unfortunately Australia had been hard hit by Mr. Holt's "horror" budget introduced at the end of 1960. Added to this, several speculative land development companies had crashed in Queensland. Money was tight and the whole economy depressed. We could sell neither the land in Queensland nor the *Sheridan Close* flat. I thought of cancelling my plan to go to Hong Kong at the end of the year, and even considered giving up the idea of the new flat. Unfortunately we had paid a deposit.

Both Vic and Robbie urged me not to cancel my visit. "Come home," they said, "and talk it over." They felt sure that they could help me. With grave misgivings and burdened with a heavy sense of guilt over my extravagance, I left for Hong Kong on 18th December, for a three-week visit.

Vic met me and took me straight to Tytam, where we were to stay with her son Tak Shing. The former "holiday shack" as Tak Shing chose to call his house, had been renovated and equipped with every modern comfort. He had turned the little summer house in the garden into a cosy "den". He steered me away from his mother and, in the privacy of his personal domain to which he alone held the key, I confessed my anxieties. I explained that, because of our inability to

dispose of our property, we were in some difficulty to meet the cost of the new flat without selling, on an unfavourable market, securities that I had hoped to preserve for the future. The children had offered their assistance but we were still short of some £6,000. Never having bought anything before on hire-purchase, I was not prepared to consider a housing loan.

"But there's no need for you to worry, Auntie Jean," he said. "Lo and Lo is doing extremely well. I can easily give, or at least lend, that amount to you."

"This is very sweet of you, Tak Shing," I said. I was touched, very touched. I could feel my eyes smarting with the threat of tears. "But I couldn't take it from you."

"Why not, Auntie Jean?" he asked. "If Daddy had been living, he would have helped you."

I thanked him, gratefully. "Uncle Robbie is going to help me arrange for a loan through the Trustees from Grandfather's estate. If I run into difficulties, I will let you know."

I need hardly add that my anxieties were at once allayed. I began to enjoy my visit. Tak Shing planned to give a party on Christmas Eve.

It had been decided that there would be no official celebration to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Father's birth on 22nd December. I took some flowers to the cemetery at Happy Valley, and Eddie's son, Joseph, who now lived at *Idlewild*, had us all to lunch.

I went to stay with Mabel at *Beach House*, where there was a gathering of the Gittinses on New Year's Eve. Mabel's son, Peter, had passed his Accountancy examinations and had just come home with his English wife, Betty. They were all looking forward to a visit from Charlotte, the eldest of the Gittins girls, who was to spend some months in Hong Kong and then come on to Melbourne to attend John's wedding in April.

Robbie gave a lunch party on New Year's Day in my honour. I stopped two nights at the Peak. I was anxious to see the converted flats. Although I had been shown one of them in 1956, they had all been let. The two on the ground floor were still rented to Americans but Robbie and family, and young Bobby who was now married, occupied the rest of



the house. Robbie and I spent the next morning in the garden. It still bore evidence of the damage sustained as a result of the war — one cannot repair trees, nor put a fresh coat of paint on them — but Robbie had been at great pains to restore the general atmosphere to its former elegance. He had planted new fruit trees from Canton, and was nursing a few rose bushes I had sent him from Queensland, as well as some of the orchids which had survived. The air of neglect so apparent in former years had given way to a new harmony. Having had so much to do with the original planning, I was naturally most interested in any ideas he had in mind.

Robbie supported me at the interview with the Trustees on the following morning, with whom I managed to secure a loan from the estate. Even at an interest rate of 8%, it was to be regarded as a moral victory because they were getting 12% on the open market for that part of the estate still under their control. Robbie very kindly gave me one thousand pounds.

The University of Hong Kong had celebrated its Golden Jubilee in the year before. Because of Billy's long association with its sporting activities, the children and I had wanted to donate a trophy which, at the Vice-Chancellor's suggestion was to take the form of a Rose Bowl for the annual *Past versus Present* Cricket Match. Victor Gittins had ordered the Rose Bowl on our behalf and the match had been arranged to be played during my visit. Since my last trip to Hong Kong, Lindsay Ride, the Vice-Chancellor, had been knighted and my friend, May Witchell, was now Lady Ride. I stayed two nights with them. At the all-day match on Sunday, 6th January, Sir Lindsay Ride was host to players and visitors at the traditional luncheon, held in the garden of *The Lodge*. It was a beautiful day and I met many old faces. I had a long and memorable discussion with Billy's friend, J. L. Youngsaye. He was one of the umpires. The Captain of the Past Eleven told me he had been a student with Serge.

The rest of the time I spent with Vic, who generously shared me with the others and yet was always present when she was needed. She had given up her large house near *Idlewild*, and now lived in a flat at Happy Valley, close by Mother's Temple/School, in which Vic continued to take a keen

interest. The sudden death of her husband had affected her deeply, but she had recovered and was beginning to lead again her former active and useful life.

When the three weeks were up I was sorry to go. But I promised I would be back. Fundamental things were no different: in spite of the faces that were missing, their spirits lived on in the hearts of the young folk. I could be assured of a warm welcome always.

Serge and I moved into *Domain Park* on Monday, 2nd April, 1963. John and Barbara were married on 11th. I didn't mind so much not being able to sell the *Sheridan Close* flat now, as they were to make it their first home. The wedding arrangements were a credit to Mrs. Gibson's organizing ability. My story would not be complete without including a short account of the happy event. This is what I told the family in a letter dated 5th May, 1963.

"It is not like me to be so long in writing about John's wedding. Our move into the new flat, the subsequent unpacking, and Charlotte's visit, have filled my days. Charlotte represented the family delightfully, and as only Charlotte can. It pleased me very much that Mr. and Mrs. Gibson asked her to join us in the vestry after the marriage ceremony. She sat at the official table at the reception.

The weather was a little on the dull side but the sun shone through at frequent intervals and the photographs, as you will see, were very good. Barbara was in tears as she came up the aisle because the photographer had failed to turn up at Elizabeth's, where Barbara had been staying. We had hoped to have had some pictures of their charming house and garden. Fortunately, he arrived in time to photograph her going into the church on the arm of her father. What a picture! In spite of the tears, she looked charming and dignified.

The reception was held at *Kingsclere*. This had been the Presbyterian Ladies' College where Elizabeth had gone to school, P.L.C. having moved to an outer suburb. There were about sixty present. We sat down to a wedding breakfast in what used to be the school's dining hall. It was interesting to see it in a new setting — Elizabeth, espe-

cially, must have felt strange.

One of the senior Foresters toasted "The Bride and Bridegroom". John spoke very nicely in reply. Despite his nervousness (which he had confessed earlier) he said what he had planned to say without faltering. Nor did he rush it through. I was proud of him.

The Gibsons had suggested that one of my friends should speak for me and Mr. Adam was asked to do the honours. John Adam is a very fine speaker and, in Melbourne, he can claim to be our oldest friend. He made an exaggerated account of my virtues sound almost true, and even quoted passages from "The Melbourne School of Pathology". Although he referred to me as Mrs. Gittins, he managed to introduce Serge into the picture in a most skilful manner.

I was pleased that I felt up to replying, welcoming the opportunity to express all your kind thoughts and good wishes. I was later told that I had spoken clearly and sincerely. It is not difficult to sound sincere when the words are meant.

The Chief Research Officer of the Forest Commission felicitated Barbara's parents.

Barbara is a very clever girl. She made her own wedding gown and her going-away outfit, as well as bake the wedding cake. She iced it too. John has clearly shown remarkable judgment in his selection of a wife.

We had fifteen to dinner in the new flat, at which Barbara and John joined us for a short while. I had not had the time to get properly unpacked; but no one minded if I didn't know where anything was!

The new flat is lovely. Besides having more room and our own laundry, the view from the balcony presents a picture of ever changing interest. Serge has already spent hours here, trying to identify landmarks which we had never seen before. It is wonderful to be able to look out over the Botanic Gardens — the autumn colouring is almost at its best now — and to see the city of Melbourne stretch far away to the foot of the Great Dividing Range. From our kitchen window — although we are only about 200 feet

above sea level — we are reminded a little of Hong Kong. On a fine day we can almost see ships enter Port Phillip Heads.

In these pleasant surroundings I spent a quiet birthday. Meanwhile Elizabeth and Stewart have added another son to their young family. Donald Stewart, born 30th March, is a tiny and most appealing looking babe."

After a short honeymoon, John and Barbara settled in the flat at *Sheridan Close* where Mrs. Melville kept a grandmotherly eye on them. John passed his final examinations at the end of the year and, in January 1964, he was appointed Assistant Forester, with headquarters in Corryong, a town at the foot of the Alps near the Victorian border with New South Wales. Corryong is a progressive town, recently made important by its proximity to the mighty Snowy Mountains project. John graduated Bachelor of Science in Forestry on 21st March, 1964. Their first child, Jeanine Maree, was born in Corryong, on 11th June of the same year.

And so, my mission accomplished, I looked forward to years of quiet contentment. I had seen Elizabeth and John through University. They were both happily married and the small family of two that met me on the *Spirit of Progress* at Spencer Street Station in October, 1945, had grown to nine in number. As far as accommodation went, I had graduated from the tiny bedroom in the Presbyterian Girls' Hostel to this delightful flat. In the University of Melbourne, I possibly reached the peak of my career when I was asked to be responsible for organizing the Centenary Ceremony and Halford Oration of the Medical School centenary celebrations in Wilson Hall. This function was attended by over 1400 guests.

Although my home is now in Melbourne, I often feel an irresistible nostalgia for Hong Kong. It is true that time had taken its toll of loved ones; but my recent visit had not only strengthened past ties. It had given a firm assurance of future welcome.

I was not entirely happy about Serge's health but, with our new and pleasant surroundings which promised so much fresh interest, I had reason to hope for improvement. All too soon I was to learn that this was not to be.

## SADNESS COMES AGAIN

Serge lived only three years in *Domain Park*. Although he seldom looked well he carried out his duties with his customary devotion. At home he continued to cook and to shop on my behalf. He spent much of his spare time improving the facilities of the flat — his one aim was to make life easier for me. He insisted that there was nothing wrong.

Ever since the illness that brought him to Australia, I had found him to be different from the fun-loving, if quiet and highly responsible, lad I had known during the brief postwar period when, with his friend Victor Zaitzev, he had been selected by Professor Faid to stay with me. I had attributed this change to his experiences during the Japanese occupation, and his subsequent severe illness, and had hoped that, with improved health, he would soon recover his spirits. As time went on, I realized that the damage had gone too deep.

I learnt to accept this and to admire his finer qualities and the intelligent application he made to a new life. He had a quiet sense of humour, although he kept to himself a good deal. He often made witty observations of situations, the funny side of which would never have occurred to me, yet he was always courteous and helpful whenever any member of the staff sought his aid. He was the same with people from other departments who came either to consult him or to borrow his equipment for, by this time he had built up a fine workshop, of which he could not help saying with some pride, that not a single tool had not been put to good use. He was perhaps most friendly with Dr. Weiner. When Stan joined the department early in 1955, we were very short of accommodation. "Prof." decided to put him in with Serge, saying he wondered if a Russian and a Pole would fight! We found that they were

of completely different dispositions but they did not fight. If there was any friction between them at any time, they kept it to themselves. All I know is that whenever I had an impracticable notion which I was impatient to put into practice, Serge would complain that I was just like Dr. Weiner! Stan and I often had our "brain waves" pulled to pieces, and then they would be improved upon and carried out. Serge would never do anything until he had given it a great deal of thought; Stan and I would never rest until we had tried out our ideas. Very often Serge was right. Occasionally, we were — we always won anyway! Thus it was a strange friendship that grew between them, a friendship bonded by mutual respect and a common interest in the electron microscopes. Stan was a great friend to us throughout Serge's illness.

The anxiety we suffered prior to moving into our new flat did not help Serge, nor did an accident I sustained due to sheer thoughtlessness. This happened only seven months after we had moved into *Domain Park*.

We had had no end of "teething" troubles. On looking back, I can't see that any one item could, of itself, have been of a serious nature but, added together, they all contributed to a build-up of mental stress. I must have been worried and preoccupied or I could never have been so careless as to try to clean the electric toaster without first disconnecting the power supply. They tell me that I should have been electrocuted. Instead, my muscles merely contracted in such a way as to prevent me from disengaging the fingers of my left hand from the electric element.

The moments that followed seemed, at the least, like minutes. Although I am told that my ordeal could only have been of a few seconds duration. I tried to reach the power point with my right hand. I was unable to straighten my arm. I tried to move towards it but the muscles of my legs refused to obey my brain's command. In desperation I tried to call out to Serge. He had been asleep when I had crept out of my bed. I had turned on the washing machine (it being a Saturday) and had closed all the doors so as not to disturb him. I was horrified to find that my voice, like my arms and legs, were no longer under my control. I could only make throaty sounds

as one does in a nightmare. I gave up in despair and waited for the end which, I thought, would come at any moment. I did not know at that time that, normally, an accident of this nature would have meant sudden death. All the things I had failed to do flashed across my mind: the legal advice I had ignored in some trifling matter concerning the children (it would have resolved itself in a couple of years) brushing aside action by saying that I did not intend to die in the immediate future. I thought of the trouble Serge and Mr. Baker, the Accountant at Weigall and Crowther, would have unravelling the intricate tangle of our finances at that time. I thought of the department. I had cleared my desk the night before, as was my custom, but I had not yet arranged payment for the part-time staff. Worse still, I had only that week elected not to change to the new scheme of Provident Fund contributions, which carried a clause to cover disability. I had discussed the alternatives with the Accountant, and we had agreed that, in my particular situation, when I was in such good health and not far from retirement and, especially, where I had to pay more for less benefit, it would not be worth my while to make the change. It now struck me that should I manage to survive this accident, I would be badly disabled. If only I could have been forewarned!

Meanwhile, as my hand burned away slowly, I could feel the electricity hammer on my right shoulder — blow upon steady blow. I wondered: "How much of this can I take?" And then I saw smoke come from what appeared to be my clothing. Although I did not feel pain, the smell of burning flesh nauseated me. "Good Lord!" I said. "I don't mind so much being electrocuted but I'd be blown if I'm going to be incinerated! I must make one last effort."

I lifted my forearms, with the toaster attached, and brought the toaster down hard on the bench. I repeated the action. With the second attempt it clattered to the floor. At the same moment Serge flung open the kitchen door and burst in:

"Whatever are you up to so early in the morning?" he cried. He could see streaks of white flesh, which he mistook to be dough, dangle from my left hand.

"I've been burnt on the toaster," I replied. "We must get help at once. Ring the "Prof." His number is on my teledex.

But the "Prof." had left for the department.

"Get Bill Rose then," I ordered. "I will speak to him myself."

I told Bill what had happened. "There's only one thing to be done, Jean." Bill said. "Go straight to Casualty." I had the foresight to ask him to warn them to expect me at the hospital. Serge drove me in . . . . .

There was some delay but we managed eventually to get hold of Jack Hueston who, some years before, had been a research worker in the department and was now a plastic surgeon. He carried out a two-hour operation of extreme delicacy. I had third degree burns with necrosis on two fingers and the thumb of my left hand, involving the entire flexor surface and extending around to the nail bed which necessitated full-skin grafts. Even if the grafts took, they warned, I would have to expect a long convalescence.

I was away from the department for only a fortnight although it was months before I was allowed to drive a car and Serge had to do many things for me. Nine months later I took up golf. Jack Hueston had prescribed exercise for the hand. I was also to try to toughen the skin. Thelma Baxter, a fine golfer who had just completed her Ph.D. thesis, was not only willing, but anxious, to help me.

My accident was a great shock to Serge from which I am sure he never fully recovered. This is something which continues to haunt me, even though we both knew it to have been an accident. It is not that Serge blamed me. He was more inclined to blame himself and he went through the flat, testing every power point for faults and changing the existing fittings for ones which had a pilot light attachment. He felt that, had this been present, the red glow might have reminded me to switch off the current.

Early in 1964, Serge was forced to turn his attention to other, more important matters. We had begun to plan seriously for our new department which was to form one wing of an eight-storey tri-radiate building, to be known as the "New Medical Centre". This was to house the department of Anatomy



on the east wing, the schools of Physiology and Pharmacology on the north wing, and Pathology, together with Medical Administration and the small department of Experimental Neurology, were to be fitted into the west wing. After several meetings, at which suggestions put forward were rejected as unsuitable by the professors, 1/16" scale outline grids were handed over to the departments, so that each could supply layouts of its individual planning. The floor area for Pathology at that time amounted to some 66,000 square feet. Professor King gave the general direction. The responsibility for providing details for the whole of our section, except for the shared facilities of lecture theatre and students' classroom, planning for which was undertaken by Anatomy, fell heavily on Serge's shoulders. In his usual meticulous manner, he supplied not only scaled drawings of our requirements, but he deemed it necessary to prepare, in addition, specifications for special electrical, mechanical and plumbing needs which the wide variety of our research equipment demanded.

While serious planning was in progress — and this lasted for over two years — Serge worked mainly at home. This was because his room in the department was overcrowded with machinery. He called at the University daily merely to keep in touch.

The flat was turned into a drawing office, except that we did not have the right furniture. Plans and more plans arrived with amazing regularity. I had the use only of my rocking chair. Admittedly this was most strategically placed for viewing television, and it had always been my favourite for reading or sewing. Serge sat consistently at his seat at the dining table. This awkward situation arose because, to make them easy of access, the plans were draped over the backs of our settee and other armchairs. If we had visitors, or when Mrs. Tyson came each week to clean the flat, Serge would roll them up and place them out of the way in the laundry. When he had the flat to himself, he would patiently spread them out again. His difficulties were multiplied by the crises that arose from time to time. After his drawings were completed it was found that an error had been made in the initial outline grid given to us and Serge's plans had to be contracted by 5,400 square feet. Subse-

quently when the plans went to tender and rising building costs forced the cancellation of an entire floor, it was Serge's responsibility to submit further adjustments, without option of replanning.

Having done all this, one would have expected that he could have returned to his other duties but attention to the new building seemed a never ending task. One day I picked up an urgent telephone call for him. It was explained that a laboratory sink had been inadvertently omitted from the final sanitary plans sent to him for checking. Serge had noticed the omission and had returned the plans with the missing sink, together with related cold and hot water taps, pencilled in. "But," the voice cried, "Mr. Hohlov has not shown a waste. We wish to know urgently if, in fact, a waste is required." The strain was beginning to tell on everyone. It was just one of those situations which so often comes with projects of this magnitude. However, I should add that, for the first time since he joined our department, Serge found work of absorbing interest in his own line. Moreover it was intensely gratifying for him to know that "Prof." had placed so much trust in him. This increased significantly his ability to carry on in the face of his crippling illness.

Professor King had been appointed medical member of the newly formed Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Commission in 1961. In 1962 he had succeeded Sir Peter MacCallum as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria. Civic responsibility had become unavoidable with seniority and, although the appointments gave him desirable interests outside the department, they were a drain on his health. We watched him sadly as he staggered under the heavy burden but there was nothing we in the department could do to lighten his load. In the New Year Honours of 1965, his services to Australia were recognized by the Queen when he was created Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. This pleased him almost as much as had his election to Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science in 1954.

For years now Professor King had lived in the shadow of illness. At times he looked so frail that it seemed as if a breath

of wind could blow him over and yet, although he was due for retirement at the end of 1965, he was asked to stay on. We were busy with preparations for the production of a companion volume to "Studies in Pathology" which had been presented to Professor MacCallum in 1950. This, like its predecessor, was to be a collection of essays on the research work of the department. The book\*, of twenty-seven essays, was presented to Edgar King on 15th December, 1965.

Serge's illness had become apparent a year before. When he could no longer conceal it, he mentioned the lump on his neck. We both knew that there could be no hope of recovery. Professor King had warned him, wisely and gently, "Serge," he had said, "you have only a very limited time but the longer you can remain on your feet, the shorter will be the time that you will have to go to bed." Serge never forgot this and, in spite of later severe spinal and hepatic involvement, stay on his feet he did — right to the very end.

Meanwhile there were short periods when it seemed that the disease was under control. Dr. Kaye Scott treated him and, especially after the initial radiotherapy at the Peter MacCallum Clinic, I dared to hope that, miraculously, they had caught it in time. Indeed when false hopes are roused, one tends to grasp at straws. Yet it is these straws, however flimsy they may be, that give us the courage to strive on.

"Serge seems so much better," Jessie Ling said to me one day, "why don't you take him away for a holiday?" Jessie had come to me in 1952, fresh from leaving school and, by virtue of long and close association, she was like a second daughter to me.

"How can we think of a holiday, Jessie," I asked, "with this illness hanging over our heads?"

"Don't forget, Mrs. G.," she said, "if what the "Prof." tells you is true, this may be Serge's last holiday."

Thanks to Jessie's timely suggestion, we spent ten quietly happy days in Mildura in northern Victoria, where the sun

---

\* "*Further Studies in Pathology*", edited by J. V. Hurley, P. E. Hughes and Jean Gittins, Department of Pathology, University of Melbourne (1965).

shines warm even in winter, and the orange trees are ripe with fruit.

But the secondary spread, which had appeared originally in the lymph gland in the neck, advanced with merciless speed as soon as we came home and, during the following six months, his vertebral column became increasingly affected. Pressure from the new building grew even more burdensome and anxiety over his illness gave us little peace. On 31st January, 1966, Professor King quietly slipped away.

We had had some exceptionally hot days and Serge was in hospital for further treatment. "Prof." had borne the heat badly but he refused to rest. Three days before his death, in spite of my begging him not to do so, he insisted on going to the hospital to see Serge. I realized later it was his way of saying "Goodbye and thank you." We never saw him again.

A few days before, "Prof." had warned me that Serge had not long to live.

"How long would you say, Professor?" I asked. "Will it be weeks, or perhaps months?"

"Weeks, at the most," he replied. "It could be days."

One of the staff observed that it would be a race between them.

When Serge heard of Professor King's passing, he went very close to giving up. But his spirit forced him to struggle on and he returned to his work for almost ten weeks. On the Wednesday before Easter, he went over, once more, all the  $\frac{1}{2}$ " detail drawings with the architects. He was taken to hospital the following day.

I am not likely to forget Easter of 1966. Good Friday was wet and bitterly cold; Holy Saturday was dreary and overcast, but Easter Day dawned serene and beautiful and, as I drove to the hospital in the morning sunshine, I prayed: "If it has to be, please God, let it be today." It was the tenth day of April. Serge passed away peacefully at 2 p.m.

And so ended a brief and tragic life. His childhood days had been happy but his later years were filled with illnesses and disappointments. He once told me that each time an objective he had worked for seemed within reach, something would happen to snatch it from his grasp. And yet, in spite of his mis-

fortunes, he maintained the qualities that heritage had given and his Mother had taught. From this path he never strayed. He was a remarkable person, blessed with the personal charm and high intelligence for which his nation is cherished and admired. A faded news-clipping, found among his papers provides, not only an insight into the pattern of his life but evidence of a foreboding of its brevity. It read:

"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

*Attributed to: Stephen Grellet (1773-1865)*

He had only wished to defer the end for another five years — to see the new building through.

He had desired that his Mother's gift of a rare edition of the "Explanatory Dictionary of the Great Russian Language" be presented to the University of Melbourne in appreciation of Professor King. These volumes are held in the research collection of the Baillieu Library. His personal papers, including his original birth certificate, have been requested, through the Head of the Department of Russian Language and Literature, for the University Archives, where I am told: "They will without doubt prove to be of very great value to scholars of the future . . . . ."

John was in Corryong when Serge was taken to hospital. Elizabeth and family were to spend Easter with him. Elizabeth wanted to stay with me, and John would have come too, but I urged them not to. There was nothing they could have done. Stewart, who stayed behind, was a great comfort in my distress.

Elizabeth and John returned for the funeral service which was attended by our friends. Warm messages of sympathy arrived from far and wide, with an invitation from Vic and from Robbie to go home for a visit. As soon as I was able, I left for Hong Kong.

In my previous trips Serge had always refused to go with me. "If I went to Hong Kong," he would say, "I would never

return to Australia." He didn't have to this time. Although his spirit is ever with me, his ashes lie resting in the harbour he loved so well.

There is much in this flat that speaks of his presence. His books, and especially the volumes of "Encyclopaedia Britannica" which he paid for with sixpences collected in a whisky bottle, are an unending source of inspiration. I am blessed with the most vivid and heart-warming memories of this gentle, kind and most courageous man who gave so generously of himself. But where is my own courage?

I sit beside my lonely fire,  
And pray for wisdom yet —  
For calmness to remember  
Or courage to forget.

Charles Hamilton Aïde: *Remember or Forget*

## *Epilogue*

### THE TIME HAS COME

The year is 1968. November is here again and, in Melbourne, the time is spring. As I drive past the small reserve in front of *Domain Park* at sundown, the noisy chatter of starlings dulls the steady hum of home-bound traffic. We are hardly a mile from the heart of the city, yet the bird-life is interestingly varied. Before dawn breaks I listen for the black-bird, whose clear notes herald a chorus of frenzied chirping. The deep-throated laugh of the kookaburra sounds loud and slightly blood-chilling to the uninitiated. Strange, too, is the raucous screech of the white cockatoos as they land, yellow crests flared, on some nearby tree. At one time we had as a neighbour a peregrine falcon, who would spend hours perched on the next balcony, watching for unwary prey.

As I hurry out of my bed of a morning, I am often fascinated by a flock of seagulls, flying in controlled formation, back and forth over the Botanic Gardens. How fresh it is at this hour. In a short while the atmosphere will grow warm and humid and the shrill cicadas will drown the sweeter notes of the birds. The lawns look lush and inviting and the colours of the trees range over every shade of green, for the drought which last year threatened to do so much damage has long since broken. There is a latent excitement in the air.

As my story has unfolded, the clarity and order of events long past have come vividly to mind. It is said that a compensation of age is its strange powers of recall which increase with the years. And now that it is all told, there remains to be recorded only a résumé of recent happenings.

On 31st January, 1967, a new professor arrived in the Department. He was no stranger. George Swanson Christie returned to us from the Chair of Pathology in the University

of Queensland, ensuring us of a worthy successor to the line of distinguished men who, for over eighty years, had graced the Melbourne Chair.

Serge's position remains unfilled. "We could never find another Serge," George had said. Perhaps this is just as well. In any case, with the completion of planning, and the appointment of an Assistant Staff Architect, departmental responsibility concerned with the new building had, even before the arrival of the new professor, been taken over by the central administration.

Our occupancy of the New Medical Centre, projected for February 1968, was put off until April. When late May came, our wing was still far from being ready. However, because of the approach of examinations, it was deemed desirable to move the teaching for the last term into the new building, leaving the rest of the department in the old. This dichotomous existence, forced on us during the worst months of Melbourne's winter, was both tiresome and awkward. I was thankful that Professor King and Serge were spared the inconveniences we suffered.

Except for Professor Christie's personal research laboratory, and the area for experimental animals, to both of which post-contractual variations have yet to be made, the move is now complete. To acknowledge that we are comfortable in the new building is a grave understatement. The grace, spaciousness, and orderly proportions of the interior set a standard for university architecture. The quiet dignity of the colour variations, and the tasteful finish of the building as a whole, reflect real credit on those who designed it.

At home the number in my small family has increased to ten. On 15th June, 1967, my grandson Peter William complemented the household in Noojee in Gippsland, where John had been transferred. They have since come to live in Melbourne, in the suburb of Doncaster, only about three miles from Elizabeth and Stewart. John is back at the University, having been awarded a scholarship to work for his Master's degree in Forestry. In appearance, little Jeanine grows daily more like her mother, which augurs well for her future. Furthermore she displays many characteristics which remind me of Elizabeth at that age. It may also be a mother's fond fancy to see in



Peter William a distinct likeness to John. Both children are a joy to us and a credit to Barbara's careful upbringing.

Serge's mother often writes to me. She shows a genuine interest in my family, asks for their photographs, and sends the children picture postcards. Her main interest, though, is to collect early editions of Russian literature to send to the University of Melbourne. As well as the encyclopaedia which Serge bequeathed to it, the Russian collection in the Baillieu Library has been augmented by her gifts of two beautifully bound volumes of verse by Tolstoy, the poet, and by the collected works of Dostoevsky, Leskov and others. Living as she does in western Siberia, with the post office miles away, the cost in time and effort can only be imagined.

The year 1968 has been a busy one. Besides the general upheaval in the department, we have had visits from some of the family. Victor's wife, Jan, stayed with me for three months, having brought their sons, Simon and Mark, to school at Geelong Grammar. In June, Vic came but briefly. She returned in July with her American grandchildren and their parents. Vic's daughter, Phoebe, and Elizabeth easily picked up the threads of their former friendship whilst the Browns from California learnt to know their Australian cousins. How these comings and goings did not clash with the activities of the department, I will never know; as it turned out, I was even able to spend a few days at home during Vic's first visit.

Should I wish to retire at this moment I would be eligible for superannuation benefits. I know that my future need never be lonely for, although I may no longer enjoy the physical presence of many who have influenced my life, I have only to turn to my story, and the memory of their existence will live once more.

George Christie has suggested that I might like to stay on in the department. This prospect has its own appeal, especially as I know that we are poised on the threshold of exciting days ahead. The department has for so long been a part of me that it will be difficult to say "Goodbye". I have, however, arrived at a decision to retire within the next twelve months, for I am ever mindful of the words of His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury:

“My vigour has not decreased. I am convinced that day by day my wisdom increases. But I am also satisfied that my stock of patience diminishes and that is why I think that the time has come.”



## List of Familiar Names

### *Family*

Elizabeth	My daughter
John	My son
Stewart	Elizabeth's husband
Barbara	John's wife
Father and Mother	My parents
Vic	My eldest sister, Victoria
Grace	A younger sister
Florence	The youngest sister
Eddie	My brother, Edward
Robbie	My brother, Robert
"M.K."	Vic's husband
Horace	Grace's husband
"K.C."	Florence's husband
Hesta	Robbie's wife
Billy	My first husband
Mr. and Mrs. Gittins	Billy's parents
Charlotte	Billy's eldest sister
Mabel	One of Billy's younger sisters
Victor	Billy's only brother
George Hall	Mabel's husband
Serge	My second husband

### *My Friends at the University of Hong Kong*

Mr. Sloss	Vice-Chancellor (1938-1949)
Lindsay Ride	Vice-Chancellor (1949-1964)
Gordon King	Dean, Faculty of Medicine
"Auntie"	Mrs. Gordon King
Bill Faid	Professor of Physics; Chief Warden of Students' Hostels
Robert Simpson	Professor of English
Gwilym Hughes	Head of Department of History
May Witchell	Vice-Chancellor's Secretary

*Close friends at the University Relief Hospital during the  
defence of Hong Kong*

Gordon King	Medical Officer-in-Charge
Bill Faid	Lay Superintendent
Kitty Gordon	Matron

*Other friends in Hong Kong*

Dr. Selwyn Clarke	Director of Medical Services
"J.L."	Billy's friend, J. L. Youngsaye
James Mackenzie Jack	Manager, William C. Jack & Co.
Horner Smith	Captain in Jardine Matheson & Co's Shipping Line
Paul Reveley	Manager, Engineering Department, Gilman & Co.

*New friends at University of Melbourne*

Peter MacCallum	Professor of Pathology (1925-1950)
Edgar King	Professor of Pathology (1951-1965)
George Christie	Professor of Pathology (from 1967)
Bill Rose	Senior Lecturer in Pathology

*Other Australian friends*

John and Maud Adam	of Kew, Melbourne
Lionel and Molly Adams	of Surrey Hills, Melbourne
Norman and Thelma Jones	of Benalla, Victoria
Mr. and Mrs. Melville	of <i>Sheridan Close</i> , Melbourne

